

JUNE ~ 1911 15 CENTS

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Concerning July Ainslee's

In their attitude toward the July number of their magazines, a good many editors resemble Uncle Ike, the sage of Malone, N. Y. Uncle Ike was always looked to for the last word on everything. Once, when news reached Malone that one of its most popular citizens was seriously ill, the village gravely shook its head.

"What does Uncle Ike say?" someone finally suggested.

Uncle Ike was straightway appealed to.

"He'll live till June," announced the sage unhesitatingly.

"How do you know?"

"Wal," drawled Uncle Ike, "he always has."

So it is with some editors. "Too good for July," they will tell you of some exceptionally good story; "save it for the fall." "Why?" you ask. "Oh, July's a poor month. The sales fall off in July." Again you ask, "Why?" "Oh, well, *they always have.*"

Isn't it barely possible that these editors are looking at the thing wrong end to? Isn't it possible that the reason the sale of some magazines drops off in July is that the editors, taking the slump for granted, lower their standard accordingly? Now we believe that a good magazine is just as good in July as it is at any season of the year.

What we've been leading up to is this:

Margareta Tuttle has written a novel of real distinction, called "By the Gate of Allah," and we are going to print it complete in the July AINSLEE'S. Moreover, we have made the rest of the magazine worthy of this exceptional novel. For the fourteen short stories in our July number we have drawn upon such authors as Herman Whitaker, Fannie Heaslip Lea, Georgia Wood Pangborn, Frank Condon, Ellis Parker Butler, Norval Richardson, Churchill Williams and Edna Kingsley Wallace.

Of all the comments upon H. Addington Bruce's absorbing series, "Adventurings in the Psychical," we have received but one that is unfavorable. A. MacK., writing from Jeffersonville, Vt., says: "I do not fancy 'Adventurings in the Psychical' because I fear that if I discovered another 'self' A might neglect to buy AINSLEE'S while B was on duty." The next paper in Mr. Bruce's series will be "Suggestion and Education."

We have absolute faith in the July number of AINSLEE'S.

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AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

VOL. XXVII

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXVII.

JUNE, 1911.

No. 5.



THE HOUSE *of* PERIL *By* *Mrs Belloc Lowndes*

CHAPTER I.

MRS. BLACKETT was resting in her sunny, barely furnished bedroom; that is, she was sitting back in a basket chair close to the open window, but though her dark-blue eyes were closed she was not asleep. She had just enjoyed a reasonable share of the copious, well-cooked meal which she had learned to think of as *déjeuner*, for this young American woman was spending a very happy summer in France—at Enghien.

It was a very hot August afternoon, but Mabel Blackett was in perfect physical condition, and in her cool, white silk-muslin gown and large black tulle hat, she felt only comfortably warm. It was an ideal day for a drive in the Forest of Montmorency—through the shady glades which used to be the principal attraction of Enghien, and Mrs. Blackett was waiting for the arrival of the friend whom she had asked to drive with her.

That friend was a Danish lady, a cer-

tain Madame Olsen. The two, both young, both widowed, both possessed of ample means, had met in the Paris hotel where Mabel Blackett had been spending a lonely week, and the two had soon become friends. It was owing to Anna Olsen that Mabel Blackett had stayed on in France instead of going on to Switzerland.

For the first time the pretty young American woman was seeing life, and she found such seeing very pleasant. How fortunate it was that one of the two mistresses of the old-fashioned "Young Ladies' School" at which she had been educated was a Frenchwoman! Thanks to that fact she spoke the language fairly well, and she had been able to make quite a number of friends in delightful Enghien.

Mrs. Blackett had been born, bred, married, and widowed in a small New England country town called Dallington. And not in her wildest dreams, during the placid days when she had been the principal heiress of that quiet —she now called it to herself, that

sleepy—little place had she conceived of so amusing, so exhilarating an existence as that which she was now leading! This was perhaps owing in a measure to the fact that there is, if one may so express it, a spice of naughtiness in life as led at Enghien. At home, neither as girl nor during her brief married life as the wife of a man much older than herself, had Mabel Blackett ever been allowed to be naughty.

A highly esteemed guidebook to Paris says of Enghien:

Situated on the border of the beautiful Forest of Montmorency, this pretty little town is still famed for its healing springs, and during the summer months of the year is much frequented by Parisians.

But this, as every one who knows Enghien is very well aware, is only half, nay a quarter or an eighth, of the truth. Enghien is the spendthrift, the gambler—the austere would call her the chartered libertine—of the group of pretty country towns which encircle Paris; for Enghien is in the proud possession of a gambling concession which has gradually turned what was once the quietest of inland watering places into a miniature Monte Carlo.

The vast majority of American visitors to Paris remain quite unaware that there is, within half an hour of the French capital, such a spot as gay Enghien; the minority, those tourists who do make their way to the alluring little place, generally live to regret that they have done so.

But in this, as in so very many other things, Mabel Blackett was the fortunate exception which proves the rule. Enghien had developed in her a most unexpected taste—that of play. She thoroughly enjoyed risking her money—enjoyed both the humble joys provided by that gambling plaything, *petits chevaux*, and perhaps even more the more dangerous delights of baccarat. But for long generations her forbears had been business people and amassing-money people, and Mrs. Blackett, after the first few days, had never been tempted to play for more than she knew she could afford to lose.

It was a sad pity that in this matter

the friend for whom she was now waiting—that is, Anna Olsen—was not as wise and sensible as herself. Mabel Blackett had an affectionate, happy nature, and as she waited for Madame Olsen her thoughts dwelt on her, not unkindly, only a little critically, as our thoughts are apt to dwell on those of our friends of whose conduct we do not particularly approve, especially if it be conduct that we ourselves would never be tempted to emulate.

Anna Olsen lived for play, and play alone. Dark, excitable, ardent, in spite of her Scandinavian blood, she was an absolute contrast to the fair American. That perhaps was one reason why they had become such friends, but sometimes Madame Olsen quite frightened Mabel Blackett by the reckless way in which she risked large sums of money at the gambling tables.

It was because of a considerable loss she had made very early in her stay at Enghien that Madame Olsen had decided to stay on at a cheap pension kept by some people called Malfait, after her American friend had moved to the Pension Noir, a better situated and altogether superior boarding house.

Mrs. Blackett, who was very fastidious in all her habits and ways, had fancied that the Pension Malfait was not quite as well kept—not quite as clean, to speak frankly—as it might be. And then Madame Wachner, one of the pleasant acquaintances Mabel Blackett and Anna Olsen had made at Enghien, had hinted that the kitchen of the Pension Malfait was not quite so scrupulously clean as it might be. That clinched the matter. The day she had received that kindly hint, Mabel had moved herself and her dainty belongings to the Pension Noir. She would have borne much for her friend, Anna Olsen, but not living on in a dirty boarding house.

There came a knock at the door, and the *commissionnaire*, by whom Mabel had sent the note inviting Madame Olsen to drive with her, walked in. He handed her back her own letter to her friend, and together with it a sheet of

common note paper, across which were scrawled in pencil the words: "*Madame Olsen est partie.*"

"*Partie?*" The word puzzled her; surely it should have been "*sorite.*"

"Then the lady was out?" she said to the man.

"The lady has left the Pension Malfait," he said briefly. "She has gone away."

"There must be some mistake!" she exclaimed in French. "Madame Olsen would never have left Enghien without telling me."

The man went on: "But I have brought back a carriage as madame directed me to do."

She paid him, and then went downstairs hurriedly. As the carriage was there, she might as well drive to Anna Olsen's pension, and find out the meaning of the curt message, and why her own letter to Anna had been opened.

As she drove along the pretty, well-kept roads lined by gay bowered villas, Mrs. Blackett began wondering uneasily as to the meaning of the message she had just received. It was out of the question that Anna Olsen should have left without telling her the place where they had both settled to spend the end of the summer. The two women had become really attached the one to the other, and Mabel hoped that in time her Danish friend would come back to America with her for part of the winter.

Madame Olsen had been remarkably lucky during these last few days—in fact, she had made quite a large sum of money at the tables. Emboldened by this good fortune, she had actually insisted, to the astonishment both of Mabel and also of the little group of acquaintances the two women had made in their respective pensions, on taking a bank at baccarat. Anna's luck had not forsaken her even then, and she had risen from the table, her dark face aglow with joy, and richer by some twenty thousand francs than when she had sat down.

That was two nights ago, and Madame Olsen had wisely determined to "cut" play for a few days. Mabel was

aware that yesterday evening her friend was to have had supper with that very lady, Madame Wachner, who had been the indirect cause of Mabel Blackett's hurried departure from the Pension Malfait.

Monsieur and Madame Wachner were a kindly, middle-aged couple with whom the two young widows had quickly struck up a kind of intimacy, and whom they now met almost daily. Both husband and wife spoke English well, and had apparently traveled a great deal in English-speaking countries. They were not French, as Mabel Blackett had at first supposed them to be, and, when she had once asked Madame Wachner if she was German, the older woman had shaken her head and answered: "We are citizens of the world. *Cosmopolites!*" Anna Olsen believed them to be Servians.

The Wachners did not live in a pension; instead they had taken for the summer a pretty little house, called the *Châlet des Muguet*, situated on the outskirts of the town. As Anna Olsen had supped with them last night, the Wachners would of course know what had happened—nay, more, it was probable that Madame Wachner had a message from Anna explaining her abrupt departure, if indeed it was true that she had really left Enghien.

While these thoughts were passing disconnectedly through her mind, Mabel Blackett was relieved to see Madame Wachner walking slowly along the road toward her.

"Madame Wachner! Madame Wachner!" she cried, and the driver of the little victoria in which she was sitting drew up. "Have you heard that Anna Olsen has disappeared? I am going to the Pension Malfait to find out about it. Do come, too. Did she say anything about going away when she had supper with you yesterday?"

With voluble thanks, Madame Wachner climbed up into the carriage, and sat down with a sigh of satisfaction. She was a stout, still vigorous-looking woman, with a shrewd, determined face lit by dark, bright eyes which allowed very little to escape them. She looked

just now hot, red, and a little breathless. She waited a few moments before answering Mrs. Blackett's question; then:

"Madame Olsen did not come to supper yesterday," she observed placidly. "We expected her, and stayed in on purpose, but she never came." Again she waited; then turned and smiled at Mabel Blackett. "Yes, it is quite true that she 'as gone away." When excited, Madame Wachner sometimes dropped her h's; apart from that, she spoke English remarkably well. "She 'as taken what you call 'French leave.'"

"But Anna cannot have left Engnien without letting me know?" Mrs. Blackett was staring straight at her companion; there was incredulity, and also discomfiture, painted on her fair, pretty face. "I'm sure she wouldn't have done such a thing! Why should she?"

The older woman shrugged her shoulders. Then, seeing that the young American looked really distressed:

"I expect she will come back soon," she said consolingly. "You know that she 'as left her luggage at the Pension Malfait? That does not look as if she 'ad gone for evare—"

"Left her luggage?" repeated Mabel. "Why, then, of course she is coming back. How could the Pension Malfait people think that she has gone—I mean for good? You know"—she lowered her voice, for she did not wish the driver to hear what she was about to say—"you know, Madame Wachner, that Anna won a very large sum of money two days ago."

Mrs. Blackett was aware that people before now have been robbed and roughly handled, even in idyllic Engnien, when leaving the Casino after an exceptional stroke of luck at the tables.

"Yes, but she 'as had plenty of time to lose it all again."

Madame Wachner spoke dryly. She was still very red, and as she spoke she fanned herself vigorously with a paper she held in her left hand.

"Oh, but indeed she did not do anything of the sort. Anna has not been inside the Casino since she took that

bank at baccarat." Mabel Blackett spoke very eagerly.

"Ah, well, that neither you nor I can say. She may have been there—and once there, well, the money flies. But let us suppose you are right—in that case surely our friend would have done very wisely to leave Engnien with her gains in her pock-kett?"

Madame Wachner was leaning back in the victoria, a ruminating smile on her broad, good-tempered face; she was thoroughly enjoying the drive, for it was very, very hot, and she disliked walking.

Something of a philosopher was Madame Wachner, always accepting with eager, outstretched hands that which the gods provided her.

And now pretty Mabel Blackett, though unobservant, as happy, prosperous youth invariably is, received the impression that her companion did not wish to discuss Madame Olsen's sudden departure; in fact, that the older woman, feeling that the matter was no concern of hers, was unwilling to talk about it.

Although Madame Wachner spent a good deal of time at the Casino and often played at *petits chevaux*, she was not a gambler in the sense that Anna Olsen was. On the other hand, Monsieur Wachner, like the Danish widow, only lived for play. L'Ami Fritz, as his wife generally called him, was a tall, thin, silent man, passionately interested in what may be defined as the scientific side of gambling—that is, in the mysterious laws which govern chance. He always played according to some elaborate "system," and, if Anna Olsen was to be believed, he lost considerable sums at the tables each week. But if that were so, then his wife never allowed the fact to disturb her. Madame Wachner was always kindly and genial, interested in her friends' affairs rather than absorbed in her own. So it was that, having become accustomed to receive interest and sympathy in full measure from the woman now sitting by her side, Mabel was surprised that Madame Wachner did not seem more concerned at Anna Olsen's departure, for

she herself felt very deeply concerned, as well as surprised and hurt.

As they came within sight of the Pension Malfait, Mrs. Blackett's companion suddenly placed her large, powerful, bare hand on the American's small, gloved one.

"Look here, Mab-bel," she said familiarly. "Do not worry about Madame Olsen. Believe me, she is not worth it. And then, you know, you still have good friends left in Enghien—I do not only speak of me and of my husband, but also of another one!" And she laughed a little maliciously.

But Mabel gave no answering smile. For the moment she was absorbed in the thought of Anna Olsen, and in the mystery of Anna Olsen's sudden departure.

As they drove up to the door of the boarding house, Madame Wachner remarked:

"I do not think, dear friend, that I will enter the Pension Malfait. They have already seen me this morning—indeed, I was there also last night, for I wished to know why Madame Olsen had not kept her appointment with us. They must be quite tired of seeing me."

Mrs. Blackett felt a little disappointed. She would have liked the support of Madame Wachner's cheerful presence when making her inquiries, for she was vaguely aware that the proprietress of Anna's pension had been much annoyed when she, Mabel, had left for the other, superior and alas, cleaner, boarding house.

Madame Malfait, an active, sharp-eyed little Frenchwoman, was sitting in her usual place; that is, in a glass cage in her hall. When she saw Mrs. Blackett coming toward her, a look of impatience and dislike came over her face.

"*Bon jour, madame,*" she said curtly. "I suppose you have come to ask me about Madame Olsen? I can give you no news—no news at all—beyond the fact that she did not come home last evening, and that this morning we found a letter in her room saying she had gone away. She need not have troubled to write—a word of explanation would

have been better, and would have prevented my servants sitting up all night — We quite feared something had happened to her."

The woman held out a sheet of note paper, on which were written the words:

MADAME MALFAIT: Being unexpectedly obliged to leave Enghien, I inclose herewith two hundred francs. You will pay what is owing to you out of it, and distribute the rest among the servants.

Mabel Blackett stared down at the open letter. Anna Olsen had not even signed her name. The few lines were very clear, written in a large, decided handwriting—considerably larger, or so Mabel Blackett fancied, than Anna's ordinary hand. But then the American had not had the opportunity of seeing much of her Danish friend's calligraphy.

She was not given much time in which to study the letter, for Madame Malfait took it out of her hand before she had quite finished reading it over for the second time.

But Mabel Blackett was quite unused to being snubbed; pretty young women provided with plenty of money seldom are; and so she did not turn away and leave the house, as Madame Malfait had hoped she would do.

"What a strange thing!" she observed musingly. "How extraordinary it is, Madame Malfait, that my friend should have gone away like this, leaving her luggage behind her! What can possibly have made her want to leave Eng-hien in such a hurry?"

The Frenchwoman looked at her with a curious stare.

"If you ask me to tell you the truth, madame," she said rather insolently, "I have no doubt that Madame Olsen went to the Casino yesterday and lost her money; became, in fact, *décavée!*" Then, rather ashamed of her rudeness, she added: "But she is a very honest lady, that I will say, for you see she left enough money to pay everything, as well as to provide my servants with handsome gratuities. That is more than the last person who left me in a hurry troubled to do."

"But it is so strange that she left

her luggage," repeated Mabel in a perplexed, dissatisfied tone.

"Pardon me, madame, that is not strange at all. She probably went to Paris without knowing exactly where she meant to stay, and she did not want to take her luggage round with her when looking for a hotel. Any moment I may receive a telegram from her telling me where to send it."

As Mabel at last began walking toward the front door, the landlady hurried after her.

"Madame will not say too much about Madame Olsen's departure, will she?" she said a little anxiously. "I do not want any embarrassments with the police. Everything is quite *en règle*. After all, Madame Olsen had a right to go away without telling madame of her plans, had she not?"

"Certainly she had the right to do so," said Mabel coldly. "But still, I should be much obliged if you would kindly send me word when you receive the telegram you are expecting her to send you about the luggage."

After she took her place in the carriage by Madame Wachner, Mrs. Blackett remained silent for a few moments. Then:

"It's very strange," she repeated; "I should never have expected Anna Olsen to do such a thing."

"Well—now that is just what I should have expected her to do," exclaimed Madame Wachner briskly. "And then there was that absurd fortune teller, you know——"

"Yes—so there was! But Anna was far too sensible a woman to be guided by a fortune teller."

"Hum! I wonder!"

The carriage was still stationary, and the driver turned round for orders.

Mabel roused herself. "Can I drive you back to the Châlet des Muguet?" she asked. "Somehow I don't feel inclined to take a turn in the Forest now."

"Well, if you do not mind"—Madame Wachner hesitated—"I should prefer to be driven to the station; in fact, I was on my way there when you met me, for L'Ami Fritz had to go to Paris"—she laughed—"to fetch money, as usual!"

His 'system' did not work well yesterday."

"How horrid!" said Mrs. Blackett naïvely. "It must be very disappointing for Mr. Wachner when his 'systems' go wrong."

"Yes—very," answered the wife dryly. "But, bah! He at once sets himself to inventing another. I lose a great deal more at my *petits chevaux* playing with francs than Fritz does each season at baccarat playing with gold. You see, a 'system' has this good about it—one generally comes out even at the end of each month."

"Does one indeed?"

But Mabel was not attending to what the other was saying. She was still absorbed in the thought of her friend, and of the mystery of that friend's sudden departure from Enghien.

CHAPTER II.

Madame Wachner, when trying to console Mrs. Blackett for the strange disappearance of her friend, Anna Olsen, had made a cryptic allusion to another friend whose presence at Enghien would console Mabel for Anna Olsen's absence.

This other friend was named the Comte De Poupel, and he was the only one of her fellow guests in the Pension Noir with whom Mabel had become on terms of kindly, almost intimate, acquaintanceship. Instinctively her mind had already turned to him in her distress, but she did not tell Madame Wachner that she intended to consult the Comte De Poupel, for, oddly enough, the Wachners and the count were by no means good friends. Indeed, from the first it had been unfortunate that Mabel's foreign friends, while all liking her, did not like one another. Thus the count only tolerated Anna Olsen, and he had tried to confine himself to a bowing acquaintance with the Wachners.

Madame Wachner returned his indifference with interest. She seemed to dislike, almost to distrust, the count.

"Take care," she would say to the charming American widow. "E is

after your dollars. He thinks you would like to be a countess. But, bah! This Poupel is no count—no count at all!"

But Mrs. Blackett had taken the trouble to ascertain that Paul De Poupel was a real count. The owners of the Pension Noir, and for the matter of that all his fellow guests, knew everything there was to know about him, even to the fact that his brother-in-law, a French duke famed in the racing world, and of whom even Mrs. Blackett had heard when living her quiet life at home, made him an allowance.

Paul De Poupel, in fact, was a typical Frenchman of a class whom the ordinary American traveler in France has scarcely ever a chance of even seeing. He belonged to the old pre-Revolution aristocracy, and had the easy charm of manner, the kindly courtesy, which in that particular, overcivilized caste took the place of more austere virtues. Very early in their acquaintance he had confided to Mabel that the passion of play had ruined his life. He was a gambler, hopelessly in the toils of the Goddess of Chance, and she had spoiled what might have been a brilliant as well as a happy career in diplomacy. He spoke English perfectly, for he had been to Oxford, and had also received part of his school education in England.

The Comte De Poupel spent most of the hours of his waking day at the Casino; but he found time even so to see a good deal of Mrs. Blackett, not only there, but elsewhere, for Enghien has many attractions more innocent than play to offer her victims.

Quite at first, remembering what she had always heard about Frenchmen and their ways, Mrs. Blackett had been a little frightened—perhaps not altogether unpleasantly frightened—by the count's proximity. She had feared that he would make violent love to her—who knows? That he would perhaps try to kiss her—in a word, behave in a way which would force her to become angry.

But nothing of the kind had ever happened. On the contrary, the Comte De Poupel always treated Mrs. Blackett with scrupulous respect, while making no secret of his surprise that he had met

her at Enghien. With strange lack of logic—or so she thought—he seriously disapproved of her gambling, even for small stakes. And very early he had warned her against making casual friendships in the Casino, where they all spent so many hours of each day.

Mrs. Blackett, as time went on, became aware that in this the count had done her a service. The people at the Casino were very ready to strike up acquaintance. One lady whom she had so met had borrowed twenty francs the third time they had spoken together. Mabel had not really minded, but she had been a little hurt, for after that day the woman had pretended not to know her.

In the early days of Mabel Blackett's stay at Enghien, the Comte De Poupel very seldom dined at the Pension Noir. He came back to dress each evening—he was the only man in the pension, and Mabel was the only lady, who dressed for dinner—but as soon as he was dressed he would hurry down to the Casino again, dining there. Of late, however, he had fallen into the habit of dining at the pension. He did so on the night Mabel had heard of her friend's departure from Enghien.

Mabel had also got into the habit of doing what everybody else did at Enghien; that is, she generally spent each evening at the Casino in company with friends—in her case, with Anna Olsen and the Wachners.

But to-night she made up her mind to stay at home, and so she brought down her needlework—she was a very feminine woman, and seemed exquisitely feminine in the pleasant veranda which was always deserted in the evening.

The hour she had spent with Madame Wachner that afternoon had left on her mind a slight feeling of disappointment and distaste. The older woman had seemed to care so very little about poor Anna, and Anna's odd disappearance. If Madame Olsen had indeed been foolish enough to go down to the Casino and lose all her money, well, that was surely a reason for them all to feel very much concerned about

her. Mabel Blackett had a generous, open nature; she would have been very glad to advance money to her friend, but Anna was not poor.

"Are you not going to the Casino to-night?" The count came forward and sat down by her. "You permit?" he asked, and waited till she looked up and said "Yes" before lighting his cigarette.

His English was excellent, but he naturally used French idioms, especially if he was at all moved. He looked at Mrs. Blackett considerably. She looked charming to-night, in her black tulle gown.

"I'm staying in this evening," she said, and then: "I'm rather miserable, for Anna Olsen has left Enghien."

"Left Enghien?" he repeated in almost as incredulous a tone as that in which Mabel had said the words some hours before when the news had been first brought her. "That's very droll, Mrs. Blackett. I should have thought your friend was not likely to leave Enghien for many weeks to come." He was asking himself why, if her friend had left Enghien, Mrs. Blackett had chosen to stay on. "And where has Madame Olsen gone?" he said at last.

"That's what is so odd about it," said Mabel plaintively. In spite of herself her voice trembled a little; she suddenly felt forlorn, unhappy. "She did not give us the slightest warning of what she was thinking of doing—in fact, only yesterday we were talking of our future plans, and I was trying to persuade her to come back to America with me on a long visit."

"But what makes you think that she has really left?" he asked.

And then Mabel told him. She described the coming of the messenger, her journey to the Pension Malfait. She repeated as far as was possible the exact words of Madame Olsen's curiously worded, abrupt letter to Madame Malfait.

"They all think," she said at last, "that Anna went to the Casino and lost all her money, and that, not liking to tell me about it, she made up her mind to go away."

"They all think?" repeated the Comte De Poupel. "Who do you mean by all, Mrs. Blackett?"

"I mean Madame Malfait and Madame Wachner," she said.

The Comte De Poupel was staring out into the darkness.

"I do not think that Madame Olsen has been at the Casino at all the last few days," he said thoughtfully. "I have been there the whole time, and I have certainly not seen her."

And then, quite irrelevantly as it seemed to him at the moment, Mrs. Blackett asked him a question.

"Are you superstitious?" she asked. "Do you believe, as so many of the people who play here do, in fortune tellers?"

"Like every one else, I have been to such people," he answered indifferently, "but if you ask my true opinion, well, no, I am quite skeptical. There may be something in what these dealers in hope sometimes say, but very often there is nothing—nothing at all. In fact, the witch generally tells her client what she supposes her client wishes to hear."

"Madame Wachner believes that Madame Olsen left Enghien because of something which a fortune teller told her—indeed, told both of us, before we left Paris."

"*Tiens! Tiens!*" he exclaimed. "Madame Wachner has never seen fit to confide this theory to me. Pray tell me all about it. Did you and Madame Olsen consult a fashionable necromancer, or did you content yourselves with going to a cheap witch?"

"To quite a cheap witch!"

Mabel laughed happily. She rather wondered now that she had never told Count Paul about her visit to the Paris fortune teller. But she had been taught to regard everything savoring of "superstition" as not only silly and weak-minded, but also as discreditable. She had gone to the Paris *décuse des bonnes aventure*s to please Anna Olsen, to whom the woman's business card had been handed by the chambermaid at their hotel. Anna Olsen had been eager to consult her, the more so that she charged so small a fee.

"Only five francs!" went on Mabel gayly. "And she gave us plenty for our money, I assure you. In fact, I can't remember half the things she said. She saw us each alone, and then together."

"And to you was prophesied?"

Again Mabel blushed.

"Oh, she told me all sorts of delightful things! But of course, as you say, they don't really *know*, they only guess at what they think one wants to hear. One of the things this woman told me was that it was quite possible that I should never go back to America—I mean at all. Wasn't that absurd?"

"Quite absurd," he said quietly, "for even if you remarried—say a Frenchman—you would still want to go home to your own country sometimes."

"Of course I should."

Once more she reddened violently, and bent low over her work. But this time the Comte De Poupel felt no pleasure in watching the flood of carmine staining, not only the smooth, rounded cheeks, but the white forehead and neck of his American friend.

Mabel went on speaking, a little quickly:

"She said the same thing to Anna—wasn't that odd? I mean she said that Anna would almost certainly never go back to her own country. But what annoyed Anna most was that she did not seem to be able to see into *her* future at all. She told her all sorts of things that had *already* happened to her, but nothing as to what was going to happen. Then she asked to see us together."

Mabel stopped speaking for a moment.

"Well?" said the count interrogatively. "What happened then?"

"She made us stand side by side, and then she stared at us in quite an odd, uncanny way, and said: 'Ah! I see now that I was right; your two fates are closely intertwined, and I wish to give you both a warning. Do not leave Paris, especially do not leave it together. I see you both running into great danger. If you do go away together—and I fear that you will do so—then I advise you,

together and separately, to come back to Paris as soon as possible.'"

"All rather vague," remarked the count, "and from the little I knew of her I should fancy Madame Olsen the last woman in the world to be influenced by that kind of thing."

"At the time Anna seemed rather impressed," said Mabel, "but, as she said, going to Enghien was scarcely leaving Paris. Still, it made her nervous when she was first playing at the tables, and, when she lost so much money the first week we were here, she said to me: 'That palmist was right—we ought not to have come here.' But afterward, when she began to be so lucky, she forgot all about it. At least, she never spoke of it again."

CHAPTER III.

Exactly a week had gone by, and no news, no explanation of her abrupt departure from Enghien had been received from Anna Olsen. Madame Malfait was still waiting for instructions as to what was to be done with the luggage and the various personal possessions the Danish lady had left scattered about her room.

To Mabel Blackett it seemed as if her friend had been obliterated, blotted out of existence, and she felt an ever-recurring surprise and discomfiture that it was so.

Outwardly the Danish lady's mysterious disappearance had been a ripple, and only a ripple, on the pleasant, lazy, agreeable life they were all leading. In fact, no one seemed to remember Anna Olsen excepting Mabel Blackett herself, and that kindly couple, Madame Wachner and her silent husband. As the days slipped by, the Wachners had grown more and more anxious, and each time Mabel saw them, and she met them daily, either the husband or the wife would ask her eagerly and sympathetically: "Has Madame Olsen returned?" or "Have you had news of Anna Olsen?" And they expressed increasing concern and surprise when her answer had always to be in the negative.

And now, as on the previous Saturday, Mrs. Blackett had come up to her room after *déjeuner*. She was sitting, as she had sat just a week ago, in her basket chair close to the window, and her mind went back to the day when she had sat there expecting her friend.

Somehow it seemed far more than a week ago since Anna had left Enghien. But then a good deal had happened in the last seven days. Mabel had made several pleasant new acquaintances, and—and—above all, she had become far more really intimate with the Comte De Poupel than had been the case before Anna Olsen's departure. They had become almost inseparable, and yet so cleverly did the Comte De Poupel arrange their frequent meetings, their long talks in the large, deserted garden of the pension, their pleasant saunters through the little town, and their long saunters in the Forest, that no one, or so Mrs. Blackett believed, was even aware of any special intimacy between them.

The count was now spending the day in Paris, and Mabel was dull and rather listless. She had never before felt that aching longing for another human being's presence which, disguised under many names in our civilized life, was in her case, and by herself to herself, called "friendship." She had been little more than a pretty child when her marriage to a man twenty years older than herself had taken place, and she had been widowed eight months later.

The Comte De Poupel seldom referred to his relations, and Mabel had felt pleased, almost flattered, when he had confided to her the insignificant fact that he had gone into Paris to-day to see his sister, the duchess, by appointment. Since she had got to know him so much better, she sometimes wondered, a little sorely, why he never suggested introducing her to any of "his people." Mabel could not understand the Comte De Poupel, and her feelings about him disturbed, almost angered, her.

But just now, on this hot Saturday afternoon, Mabel Blackett's thoughts were being forced into a new channel,

and one that led to the temporary exclusion of all that concerned her present life. She had learned that morning that a friend of hers, a man whom she had known all her life, who had not so very long ago wanted to marry her, and who was also, oddly enough, her trustee—was coming to Enghien in order to see her on his way to Switzerland.

Just now Mrs. Blackett could well have dispensed with Bill Oldchester's presence. When she had left Dallington six months ago she had felt very kindly disposed to Bill. In fact, she had almost brought herself to think that she would, in time, become Mrs. Oldchester. She knew that he loved her with a solid, enduring love which never faltered. But lately, during the last few weeks, she had told herself that life offered her far more than the New England country lawyer could give her.

There is in every woman a passion for romance. In Mabel Blackett this passion had been balked, not satisfied, by her first marriage. Oldchester's devotion had touched her, the more so that it was expressed in actions rather than words, for he was the type of man—seldom unfortunately a romantic type—who would have scorned to take advantage of his fiduciary position. Moreover, the fact that he was her trustee brought them into occasional conflict. Too often he was the candid friend instead of the devoted lover, and now Mabel told herself ruefully that Bill would certainly disapprove of the kind of life—idle, purposeless, frivolous—she was now leading.

Already Mabel and Oldchester had had one rather sharp "tiff." He had vehemently disapproved of the way she had "invested" a few thousand dollars which had been left her by a distant relation within a few months of her widowhood. Mabel had insisted—after all, a woman has a right to do what she likes with her own money—on buying with this legacy a string of pearls.

Bill Oldchester had been really horrid about it, and Mabel even now had not quite forgiven him the "fuss" he had made. She had told him angrily

that in the dull, stupid town set in which he lived the women were dowdy. All the New York ladies in whose doings the inhabitants of Dallington took so keen an interest, wore strings of real pearls, and, as she now reminded herself, nothing she had ever bought, nothing which had ever been given her, had given her such lasting pleasure as had her string of pearls. Indeed, they had become part of herself; she wore them night and day, and even Bill Oldchester had had to admit that as they increased in value every six months they had not been so bad an investment, after all.

"Missis Bla—quette, Missis Bla—quette!"

Mrs. Blackett jumped up eagerly from her chair, and ran to the window.

The Comte De Poupel stood below, in the garden which was one of the charms of the Pension Noir. In spite of the great heat the Frenchman looked, as he generally did look, cool, unruffled, self-possessed. There was a gay little smile on his face, and as their eyes met he took a cigarette from between his lips.

One of the things which fascinated Mabel was the count's fine breeding. He was so courteous, so delicately considerate in his manner. But she was so far the only one of his fellow visitors in the Pension Noir with whom he condescended to any real acquaintance. Mabel was puzzled by this aloofness. American gentlemen—she realized that her friend was a gentleman—are so hail fellow well met with everybody—but the Comte De Poupel was very distant to those of his own fellow countrymen and countrywomen who, like himself, came to Enghien to gamble.

Though he seemed as if he hadn't a care in the world, save the pleasant care to enjoy the present, life was looking very gray just then to Paul De Poupel.

To a Parisian, Paris in August is a depressing place, and his sister, who had journeyed all the way from Brittany to see him, had received him with that touch of painful affection which the kindly and the prosperous so often bestow on those whom they feel to be

at once beloved and prodigal. They had lunched together in their eldest brother's house, the old family house in the Faubourg St. Germain, and both had been reminded of far-off, happy, childish days when life had stretched out so pleasantly before them.

As a matter of fact, the count ought to have felt exceptionally happy to-day. One of his great-aunts had died intestate, leaving a fair estate to be divided among her great-nephews and nieces. The sum meant little to the others, but it was a very agreeable windfall to Paul De Poupel. And then, just as he had said good-by to his sister, she had kissed him with extra warmth, slipping an envelope, as she did so, into his hand. It contained her share of the unexpected legacy. The prodigal had taken the gift, not only because he knew a refusal would have pained his kind sister, but also because he was ruefully aware that the time would come when he would be very glad of the money.

But he had returned to Enghien, hating his life—hating even the place where he was now leading so useless and ignoble an existence.

Just now the only bright spot in the count's life was pretty, simple, unsophisticated Mrs. Blackett. But even in this matter his conscience was not wholly at ease. He told himself, and that frequently, that this American, with her absurd, touching lack of worldly knowledge, had no business to be living at Enghien, wasting her money at the *petits chevaux* and baccarat tables. Apart from that he, Paul De Poupel, had no business to be flirting with her; for, though Mrs. Blackett was unaware of the fact, Paul De Poupel was carrying on a very interesting flirtation with the lady he called in his own mind his *petite amie Américaine*. And very much he enjoyed the experience.

Yet now, to-day, he had almost made up his mind to leave Enghien for a while, and to spend the money his sister had given him in taking a healthy, respectable holiday in Switzerland. As a younger man, he had been a distinguished "Alpinist"—many Frenchmen

of his class are intrepid mountaineers. Were he to go away, he suspected that Mrs. Blackett, especially now that her friend, Madame Olsen, had left the place with such odd abruptness, would almost certainly leave, too.

But when he looked up at the jasmine-framed window at which his *petite amie Américaine* stood smiling at him, Paul De Poupel made up his mind, manlike, that the immediate thing to do was to enjoy the present, and forget both the past and the future.

Mabel Blackett, wearing a pinkish mauve cotton gown and her large black tulle hat, looked enchantingly pretty. True, the count's critical French eyes objected to the alliance of the cotton frock and the beautiful string of pearls, but he was fast approaching the state of mind when a man of fastidious taste forgives even a lack of taste in the woman to whom he is acting as philosopher and friend.

"Come into the garden," he quoted softly, and Mrs. Blackett, leaning over the bar of her window, thought he added the word "Maud," but of course that could not be, for her name, as the count well knew, was Mabel.

"I am so comfortable up here—I don't believe it will be half as cool in the garden!"

She looked down at him coquettishly, pretending—only pretending—to hesitate as to what she would do in answer to his invitation.

But Mabel Blackett was but an amateur at the great game—the game at which only two can play, and yet which is capable of such infinite, such bewilderingly protean variations. And so her next move—one which Paul De Poupel, smiling behind his mustache, naturally foresaw—was to turn away from the window, and run down the steep staircase of the pension with the more haste that it had suddenly occurred to her that the count, taking her at her word, might have suddenly gone off to the Casino, there as usual to lose his money; for whatever he might be in love, he was singularly unlucky at cards.

Mrs. Blackett liked to think that she was gradually weaning her new friend

from what she sorrowfully knew to be in his case, whatever it was in hers, and in that of the many people about them, the vice of gambling.

When, a little breathless, she joined him in the garden, she found that he had already dragged two rocking-chairs into a shady corner, out of sight of the house and of its inquisitive windows. The Pension Noir was very prosperous, and accordingly the garden was cared for and well kept; just now it was brilliant with the serpentine bedding-out to which the old-fashioned French gardener is addicted, and cool with the plashing of fountains.

As the pretty American came up to him, the count did not shake hands as one of her own countrymen would have done; instead he bowed low, and then conducted her ceremoniously to her chair.

"Well, *petite madame*," he said, with the tired smile, the humorous twinkle in his eye which always made Mabel Blackett feel that he was, after all, not quite as serious as she would have liked him to be when with her. "Well, and how have you been all to-day? Dull?" And as she nodded, smiling, he added casually: "Any news of the vanished one?"

Mrs. Blackett shook her head. Somehow she did not care to joke about Anna Olsen's departure. The Danish woman's odd, and to her inexplicable, conduct had really hurt her.

The count leaned forward, and speaking this time with all the banter gone out of his voice, he said:

"Listen. I am now going to speak to you as frankly as if you were my—my sister. You should not waste a moment of your time in regretting Madame Olsen. She was no friend for you. She was an unhappy woman held tightly in the paws of the tiger—Play. That is the truth, *ma belle petite madame*. She could be no use to you, and you could be no use to her. It is a pity you ever met her, and I am glad she went away without doing any further mischief. It was bad enough to have brought you to Engleien, and taught you to gamble. Had she stayed on, she would have

tried in time to make you go on with her to Monte Carlo!"

He shook his head expressively.

Mrs. Blackett opened her lips; she hesitated, then said a little nervously:

"Tell me—you did not ask Madame Olsen to go away, did you, Count Paul?"

He looked at her, genuinely surprised.

"I ask Madame Olsen to go away?" he repeated. "Such a thought never even crossed my mind. It would have been very impudent of me to do such a thing! Tell me what made you suppose it? You must think me a terrible hypocrite, *petite madame!* Have I not shared your surprise at her leaving so suddenly—so mysteriously?"

Mabel grew very red. As a matter of fact, it had been Madame Wachner who had suggested to her the idea. "I should not be surprised," she had said, "if that Count De Poupel persuaded your friend to go away. He wants the field clear for himself!" And then she had seemed to regret her imprudent words, and she had begged Mabel not to give the count any hint of her suspicion. Mrs. Blackett, till a moment ago, had faithfully kept her promise; even now she did not mean to break it.

She grew still redder, for she returned, to the count's satisfaction, the youthful habit of blushing.

"Of course I don't think you a hypocrite," she said awkwardly; "but you never did like poor Anna—and you are always telling me that Enghien isn't a place where a nice woman ought to stay long. I thought you might have said something of the same kind to Madame Olsen."

"And do you really think"—Count Paul spoke with a touch of sharp irony in his gentle, low voice—"that your friend would have taken my advice? Do you think that Madame Olsen would look either to the right or the left when the Goddess of Chance beckoned?" And he waved his hand in the direction where they both knew the great gambling *établissement* lay, crouching, like some huge, prehistoric monster, on the bank of the lake which is the innocent

attraction Enghien offers in the dog days to the jaded Parisian.

"But the Goddess of Chance did not beckon to her to leave Enghien!" she exclaimed. "Why, she meant to stay on here till the middle of September."

"You asked me a very indiscreet question just now." The count leaned forward, and looked straight into Mrs. Blackett's eyes.

"Did I?" she said seriously.

"Yes. You asked me if I had persuaded Madame Olsen to leave Enghien. Well, now I ask you, in my turn, whether it has ever occurred to you that the Wachners know more of Madame Olsen's departure than they admit? I gathered that impression the only time I talked to your Madame Wachner about the matter. I felt sure that she knew more than she would say. Of course, it was only an impression."

Mabel hesitated.

"At first Madame Wachner seemed annoyed that I made a fuss about it," she said thoughtfully. "But lately she has seemed as surprised and sorry as I am myself. Oh, no, count; I am sure you are wrong. Why, you forget that Madame Wachner walked up to the Pension Malfait that same evening—I mean the evening of the day Anna left Enghien. In fact, it was Madame Wachner who first found out that Anna had not come home. She went up to her bedroom to look for her."

"Then it was Madame Wachner who found the letter?" observed the count interrogatively.

"Oh, no, it wasn't! The letter was found the next morning by the chambermaid. It was in a blotting book on Anna's table, but no one had thought of looking there. You see, they were all expecting her to come back that night. Madame Malfait still thinks that she went to the Casino in the afternoon, and, after having lost her money, came back to the pension, wrote the note, and then went out and left for Paris without saying anything about it to any one."

"Well, I suppose something of the sort did happen," said the Comte De

Poupel thoughtfully. He had never liked the Danish woman, and he had not thought her a suitable companion for his unsophisticated American friend.

"And now," he said, getting up from his chair, "I think I will take a turn at the Casino."

It had been tacitly agreed between Mabel and himself very early in their acquaintance that he and she would not go down to the *établissement* together, and Mrs. Blackett's face fell. It seemed too bad that the count could not spend even one afternoon, and in her company, without indulging in what he admitted to be his fatal vice. But though her lip quivered, she was too proud, in some ways too reserved a woman, to make any appeal to him to stay here, with her, in this shady, quiet garden.

"It doesn't seem quite so hot as it did," she said, getting up. "I think I will go and have tea with the Wachners. They never go to the Casino on Saturday afternoons."

A cloud came over the count's face.

"I can't think what you see to like in that vulgar old couple," he exclaimed irritably. "To me there is something"—he hesitated, seeking for an English word which should exactly express the French word *louche*—"sinistaire—that is the word I am looking for—there is to me something sinistaire about the Wachners."

"Sinister?" repeated Mabel, surprised. "Why, they seem to me to be the most good-natured, commonplace people in the world; and then they're so fond of one another!"

"I grant you that," he said. "I quite agree that that ugly old woman is very fond of her 'Ami Fritz,' but I do not know if he returns the compliment!"

Mabel looked pained; nay, more, shocked.

"I suppose French husbands only like their wives when they are young and pretty," she said slowly.

"Another of the many injustices you are always heaping on my poor country," the count protested lightly. "But I confess I deserved it this time! Jok-

ing apart, I think 'L'Ami Fritz' is very fond of his"—he hesitated, then ended his sentence with "old Dutch!"

Mabel could not help laughing.

"It is 'too bad of you,'" she exclaimed, "to talk like that! The Wachners are very nice people, and I won't allow you to say anything against them."

"By the way, do you know to what nationality the Wachners belong?" asked the count casually. "I have always considered that 'L'Ami Fritz' looks like nothing so much as the popular notion of the Wandering Jew. But, mind you, I do not believe for a moment that he is an Israelite. Were he so, he would know how to take better care of his money."

"But Monsieur Wachner does not lose much money," said Mabel eagerly. "His wife told me not long ago that he came out almost 'even' each month. People who play on a 'system' always do."

"Do they indeed?" The count made an ironical, little bow. "Let me inform you, *ma belle madame*, that it was on a 'system'—and a very good 'system,' too—that I myself became what you Americans would call 'dead broke.'" He sighed suddenly, deeply. "But I will not say anything more against the Wachners this afternoon, for your visit to them will give me your company for part of the way to the Casino, and your company always does me good!"

The Comte De Poupel was fond of saying things like that to Mabel Blackett, and when he said them she always wondered what he exactly meant by saying them. She had come to treasure his light compliments, to long for the pleasant, caressing words he sometimes uttered when they were alone together.

This time he was even better than his words, for he went on and on with Mabel; in fact, till they were actually within sight of the little, isolated villa where the Wachners lived.

There, womanlike, she made an effort to persuade him to go in with her.

"Do come," she said urgently. "Madame Wachner would be so pleased! She was saying the other day that you had never been to their house."

But Count Paul smilingly shook his head.

"And I have no intention of ever going there," he said deliberately. "You see I do not like them. I suppose—I hope"—he looked again straight into Mabel Blackett's ingenuous, blue eyes—"that the Wachners have never tried to borrow money of you?"

"Never!" she cried, blushing violently. "Never, Count Paul! Your dislike of my poor friends makes you unjust—it really does."

"It does! It does! I beg their pardon and yours. I was foolish, far worse, indiscreet, to ask you this question. I regret I did so. Accept my apology."

She looked at him to see if he was sincere. His face was very grave; and she looked at him with perplexed, unhappy eyes.

"Oh, don't say that!" she said. "Why should you mind saying anything to me?"

But the Comte De Poupel was both vexed and angry with himself.

"It is always folly to interfere in any one else's affairs," he muttered. "But I have this excuse—I happen to know that last week, or rather ten days ago, the Wachners were in considerable difficulty about money. Then suddenly they seemed to have found plenty; in fact, to be as we say here *à flot*. I confess that I foolishly imagined, nay I almost hoped, that they owed this temporary prosperity to you. But, of course, I had no business to think about it at all—still less any business to speak to you about the matter. Forgive me, I will not so err again."

And then, with one of his sudden, stiff bows, the Comte De Poupel turned on his heel, leaving Mabel Blackett to make her way alone to the little wooden gate on which were painted the words: "Châlet des Muguet."

CHAPTER IV.

Mabel Blackett pushed the gate open, and began walking up the path which lay through the neglected, untidy garden.

To-day a deep, hot calm brooded over

the silent house and garden; the chocolate-colored shutters of the living rooms were closed, and Mabel Blackett told herself that it would be delightful to pass from the steamy heat outside into the dimly lighted, sparsely furnished "salon," there to have a cup of tea and a pleasant chat with her friends before accompanying them in the cool of the late afternoon down to the Casino.

Mrs. Blackett always enjoyed talking to Madame Wachner. The elder woman amused her by clever if sometimes rather coarse talk, and above all she flattered her. Mabel Blackett always left the Châlet des Muguet thoroughly pleased both with herself and with the world about her. There was very little concerning the pretty American widow's simple, uneventful life with which Madame Wachner was not by now acquainted. She knew, for instance, that Mabel had no close relations, only many friends, and, that, oddly enough, Mrs. Blackett knew nobody—that she had not even an acquaintance living in Paris.

As she walked round to the side of the house where was the front door, Mabel Blackett found herself wondering, with a touch of uneasiness, why the Comte De Poupel and the Wachners disliked one another so much. It was the more strange as he and "L'Ami Fritz" had one great taste in common—that of gambling.

But long before she had thought of an answer to this perplexing question, the day servant opened the door with the words: "Monsieur and madame are in Paris." The woman added, with a rather insolent air: "They have gone to fetch some money." And her manner said plainly enough: "Yes, my master and mistress—silly fools—have lost their money at the Casino, and now they are gone to get fresh supplies!"

Mabel had had her long, dusty walk for nothing.

In her precise, carefully worded French, Mrs. Blackett explained that she would like to come in and have a little rest. "I am sure that Madame Wachner would wish me to do so," she added, and after a rather ungracious pause

the woman admitted her into the house, showing her into the darkened dining room, and not into the drawing-room.

"Do you think it will be long before Madame Wachner comes back?" asked Mabel.

The servant hesitated. "I do not know. They never tell me anything."

She hustled out of the room for a few moments, and then came back holding a cotton parasol in her hand.

"I do not know if madame wishes to stay on here by herself? As for me, I must go now, for my work is done. Perhaps when madame leaves the house she will put the key under the mat."

"Yes, if I leave the house before Monsieur and Madame Wachner return home, I will certainly do so. But I expect they will be here before long."

The women hesitated, and then: "Should the master and mistress come back before madame has left, will madame kindly explain that she insisted on coming into the house? I am absolutely forbidden to admit visitors unless monsieur or madame is there to entertain them."

The woman spoke quickly, her eyes fixed expectantly on the lady sitting before her. Mrs. Blackett took her purse out of her pocket, and held out a two-franc piece.

"Certainly," she said coldly, "I will explain to Madame Wachner that I wished very much to come in and rest."

The servant's manner altered, it became familiar, servile.

"Has madame heard any news of her friend?" she inquired. "I mean Madame Olsen?"

"No," Mrs. Blackett spoke very shortly. "I have heard nothing of her yet; but, of course, I shall do so soon."

"The lady stopped here on her way to the station. She seemed in high spirits."

"Oh, no," said Mabel Blackett quickly. "Madame Olsen did not come here the day she left Enghien."

"Indeed, yes, madame. I had to come back that evening, for I had forgotten to bring in some sugar. The lady was here, and she was still here when I left the house."

"You are making a mistake," said Mrs. Blackett shortly. "Madame Olsen left Enghien on the Saturday afternoon. Monsieur and Madame Wachner expected her to supper, but she never came."

The woman looked at her fixedly.

"No doubt madame knows best," she said indifferently. "One day is like another to me. I beg madame's pardon."

She laid the house doorkey on the table; then, with a muttered good day, she noisily closed the door behind her.

A moment later Mrs. Blackett found herself in sole possession of the Châlet des Muguet.

Even the quietest, the most commonplace house has, as it were, an individuality that sets it apart from other houses. And even those who would deny that proposition must admit that every inhabited dwelling has its own special nationality. The Châlet des Muguet was typically French and typically suburban, but where it differed from thousands of houses of the same type dotted round in the countryside within easy reach of Paris was that it was let each year to a different set of tenants.

Even to Mabel Blackett's unobservant eyes, it lacked all the elements which go to make a home. The furniture was not only cheap, it was common and tawdry. On the floor of the dining room, in place of the shining parquet floor, which is almost universally seen in French rooms, lay an ugly piece of linoleum of which the pattern printed on the surface simulated a red-and-blue marble pavement. Yet each of the living rooms, in curious contrast to the garden, was singularly clean, and almost oppressively neat.

Mrs. Blackett got up from the hard, cane chair on which she had been sitting. She had suddenly experienced an odd feeling, that of not being alone, and she looked down half expecting to see some small animal crouching under the table, or hiding by the walnut buffet behind her. But no, nothing but the round table, and the six chairs stiffly placed against the wall, met her eyes.

She told herself that it would be more comfortable to wait in the draw-

ing-room than in this bare, ugly dining room, and so she walked through into the tiny "salon."

This room also was singularly bare; there was not a flower, not even a book or a paper, to relieve the monotony. The only ornaments were a gilt clock on the mantelpiece, flanked with two sham Empire candelabra. In spite of, or perhaps because the shutters were so closely shut to, the room seemed very hot and airless.

Not for the first time since she had made their acquaintance, Mrs. Blackett wondered why the Wachners preferred to live in this cheerless way, with a servant who came only for a few hours each day, rather than in a hotel or boarding house. And then she reminded herself that, after all, the silent, gaunt man and his talkative, voluble wife seemed to be on exceptionally good terms the one with the other. Perhaps they really preferred being alone together than in a more peopled atmosphere.

Mabel began moving aimlessly about the room. She felt unaccountably nervous and depressed. She longed to be away from this empty, still house, and yet it seemed absurd to leave just when the Wachners might be back any moment.

After a few more minutes, however, the quietude, and the having absolutely nothing to do with which to while the time away, got on her nerves. It was, after all, quite possible that the Wachners would wait in Paris till the heat of the day was over. If so, they would not be back till seven o'clock. Then there came to her a happy thought. Why should she not leave a note for Madame Wachner inviting her and her husband to dinner at the Pension Noir? That disagreeable day servant had not even laid the cloth for her employers' evening meal.

Mabel looked round for paper and envelopes, but there was no writing-table in the little, square drawing-room. How absurd and annoying! But stay—somewhere in the house there must be writing materials—probably in Madame Wachner's bedroom. The American had already been in her friend's bed-

room two or three times, so she knew the way there quite well. The husband and wife occupied two rooms on the ground floor at the back of the villa. In order to save trouble, they did not use the upper story at all.

Treading softly, and yet hearing her footsteps echoing with unpleasant loudness through the empty house, Mabel Blackett walked past the bright, little kitchen, and so made her way to the end of the narrow passage.

As she opened the door of Madame Wachner's bedroom, Mabel Blackett stopped and caught her breath. Once again she had experienced the odd, eerie sensation that she was not alone, but this time it was far more real than it had been in the dining room. So strong, so definite was her impression that there was some one there, close behind her, that she turned sharply round—but all she saw was the empty passage stretching its short length down to the entrance hall.

She walked through into the bedroom. It was very poorly furnished, at least to her American eyes, but it was pleasantly cool after the drawing-room.

She walked across to the window, and drew aside the muslin curlins. Beyond the patch of shade thrown by the house the sun beat down on a ragged, unkempt lawn, but across the lawn Mabel Blackett noticed for the first time that there lay a little wood, a grove of chestnut trees, and further, that there was a gap in the hedge which separated the wood from the unkempt grounds of the Châlet des Muguet.

She turned away from the window. Yes, there at last was what she had come there to find. Close to Madame Wachner's broad, low bed was a writing table, or rather a deal table, covered with a turkey red cloth, on which lay a large sheet of ink-stained, white blotting paper. Flanking the blotting paper was a pile of small account books, and glancing at these Mabel smiled, for Monsieur Wachner never went into the gambling rooms without taking with him one of these shabby, little notebooks in which to note down the figures on which he based his elaborate "systems."

She went close up to the writing table and began looking for some note paper, but there was nothing of the sort to be seen, neither paper nor envelopes. This was the more absurd as there were pens, and an inkstand filled to the brim. Then she bethought herself that the simplest thing to do would be to tear a blank leaf out of one of Monsieur Wachner's notebooks; on it she would write down her message, leaving it on the dining table, where they would be sure to see it. She knew that the Wachners always accepted her invitations, as they had done those of Anna Olsen, with alacrity.

She took up the newest looking of the little notebooks. As she opened it, she suddenly, and for the third time, felt a living presence close to her—but this time it seemed to be that of Anna Olsen. It was an extraordinary sensation—vivid, uncanny, terrifying—for Mabel Blackett not only believed herself to be alone in the villa, but she thought it almost certain that her friend was far away, probably by this time ship-bound for her own country, Denmark.

Fortunately the unnerving impression did not endure, and, as her eyes became focused on the book she held in her hand, it became fainter and fainter. Then Mabel realized, with a sense of relief, what it was that had brought the presence of her absent friend so very near to her; there, actually lying open before her, between two leaves of the notebook, was a letter in Anna Olsen's handwriting! It was very short, couched in stiff though grammatical French, and was dated ten days ago. In it the writer accepted Madame Wachner's invitation to supper for the day she had left Enghien. On the page opposite to where the letter rested Monsieur Wachner had evidently amused himself in copying, or rather in imitating, Madame Olsen's peculiar, upright handwriting. Words picked out of the letter here and there had been scrawled down, again and again.

After having torn out one of the blank pages, Mabel laid the notebook and its inclosure back on the table. She felt vaguely touched by the fact that

the Wachners had kept her friend's last letter; they alone, so she reminded herself, had been really sorry and concerned at Madame Olsen's sudden departure from the place. They also, like Mabel, had been pained that their friend had not cared to say good-by to them.

She scribbled a few lines on the scrap of paper, and then, quickly making her way to the dining room, she placed her unconventional note on the table, and went into the hall. She felt thoroughly nervous—as she expressed it to herself, "upset." For the first time Enghien became utterly distasteful. She asked herself, with a kind of surprise, of self-rebuke, why she was there—away from her own country and her own people? Even the Comte De Poupel seemed an alien, a stranger. She suddenly felt as if it would be very comfortable to see once more the tall, broad figure of Bill Oldchester.

As she opened the front door of the Chalet des Muguet, she was met by a blast of hot air. Feeling as she now felt, walking back through the heat would be intolerable. She looked out dubiously; to the left, across the lawn, lay the chestnut wood.

Mabel Blackett put up her white parasol, and hurried across the scorched grass to the place where there was an opening in the rough hedge. A moment later she was through it, and into the grateful shade cast by high trees.

It was delightfully cool and still. She wondered vaguely why the Wachners had never taken her in there—but foreigners are very law-abiding, or so Mabel Blackett believed. The wood, if a piece of no-man's land, was for sale; there was a large board up with a small plan on it. Mabel realized that it would have been turned into villa land long ago had it been nearer a road. Now it was still a tiny stretch of primeval forest; there was a good deal of undergrowth, and here and there, lying amid the tufts of grass, were the husks of last autumn's chestnuts. Mrs. Blackett followed the little zigzag path which cut across the wood, and then, desiring to sit down for a while, she struck to the right, where there was a little clearing,

Mabel sat down on the hard ground. Even here, where the sun could never penetrate, the tufts of coarse grass were dried up by the heat; there was no fear that they would stain her pretty cotton frock.

All at once she became aware that to her right, where the undergrowth began again, the earth had recently been disturbed. Over an irregular patch of about a yard square the sods had been dug up, and then planted again. The thought passed through her mind that children had been playing there, and that they had made a rude attempt to destroy their handiwork, or rather to prevent its being noticed, by placing the branch of a tree across the little piece of ground where the earth had been disturbed. It was this branch, of which the leaves were now shriveled up, that had first drawn her attention to it.

Her thoughts wandered to Bill Oldchester; he was now actually journeying toward her as fast as boat and train could bring him; in a couple of hours he would be in Paris, and then he would come out to Enghien in time for dinner. Mabel had not been able to get a room for him in her own pension, but she had engaged one in the boarding house of Madame Malfait—the room, as a matter of fact, which had been occupied by Anna Olsen.

She could not help being sorry that Bill would see Enghien for the first time on a Sunday. To his eyes the place, on that day of all days, would present a peculiarly—well—disreputable appearance. Mabel Blackett felt jealous for the good fame of Enghien. She told herself that she had been very happy here, singularly, extraordinarily happy.

Something told her, and the thought was not unpleasing to her, that Bill Oldchester and the Comte De Poupel would not get on well together. She wondered if the Comte De Poupel had ever been jealous—if he was capable of jealousy. It would be rather amusing to see if anything could make him so.

And then her mind traveled far, to a picture with which she had been familiar for a long time, for it hung in the draw-

ing-room of one of her friends at Dallington. It was called "The Gambler's Wife." She had always thought it a very pretty and pathetic picture, but she no longer thought it so; in fact, it now appeared to her to be a ridiculous travesty of life. Gamblers were just like other people, neither better nor worse—and often infinitely more lovable than were some other people.

Mabel Blackett got up, and slowly made her way out of the wood. She did not go again through the Wachners' garden; instead, she struck off to the left, onto a field path, which finally brought her to the main road.

As she was passing the Pension Malfait the landlady came out to the door.

"Madame!" she cried out loudly. "I have news of Madame Olsen at last! Early this afternoon I had a telegram from her asking me to send her luggage to the cloakroom of the Gare du Nord."

Mabel felt very glad—glad, and yet once more perhaps unreasonably hurt. Then Anna Olsen had been in Paris all the time? How odd, how really unkind of her not to have written and relieved her American friend's anxiety!

"I have had Madame Olsen's room prepared for your friend," went on Madame Malfait amiably.

She was pleased that Mrs. Blackett was giving her a new guest, and it amused her to consider what prudes American women were. Fancy putting a man who had come all the way from America to see one, in a pension situated at the other end of the town to where one was living oneself!

CHAPTER V.

Mr. William Oldchester, lawyer, and respected citizen of Dallington, Massachusetts, after having fulfilled the very slight formalities which are required of any stranger desirous of forming part of the "Club" of Enghien, walked through into the large and beautifully decorated Salles de Jeu of the Casino.

Late though it was, considerably after eleven o'clock, the gambling rooms were full of a seething crowd of chattering

men and women, and he felt slightly confused, as well as cross and tired.

Eagerly concerned with their own affairs as were most of the people there, some of them yet found time to look at one another and smile, as the young American elbowed his way through them.

The scene in which Mabel Blackett's trustee and erstwhile lover found himself bewildered and amazed him—also he was suffering from a distinct sense of injury.

The boat train had been late in arriving at Paris, so he had dined there, and had not reached Enghien till after ten o'clock. Mrs. Blackett had told him that she would take a room for him in the boarding house where she was staying, and Oldchester, tired after a long, hot journey, had looked forward to a pleasant, little talk with her, followed by a good night's rest. But at the Pension Noir he had been met with the news that Mrs. Blackett had gone out for the evening. This information was tendered with profuse apologies by a lively, little Frenchman who seemed the only person left in the large house, and who was evidently the proprietor of the boarding house.

Oldchester had listened impatiently while the man explained that Madame Blackett, having waited for m'sieur till half-past nine, had concluded that he meant to spend the night in Paris, and so had gone to the Casino which, as m'sieur doubtless knew, was the great attraction of delightful and salubrious Enghien.

The American asked to be shown to the room which Mrs. Blackett had engaged for him; but again there came a torrent of apologies in Monsieur Noir's voluble and flowery French. There was, alas, no room for m'sieur in the pension; in fact, the boarding house was so extraordinarily prosperous that there never was a room there unless one engaged it three or four weeks beforehand! But m'sieur must not feel cast down, for Madame Blackett had procured a room for m'sieur in another pension, inferior no doubt to the Pension Noir, but still quite comfortable. Ma-

dame had been terribly disappointed, and she had hoped m'sieur would come to dinner—indeed, an extra place had been laid at her dining table. Madame Blackett had been entertaining a few friends that evening, and it was with them that she had gone on to the Casino.

Oldchester, more and more surprised, asked the man when he thought Mrs. Blackett would be back. To the American lawyer it seemed so odd that there should be a Casino in the quiet place near Paris where his widowed friend was living.

Monsieur Noir spread out his hands with an eloquent gesture, and shook his head.

"Perhaps in one hour—perhaps in two hours," he said vaguely.

Oldchester abruptly asked the way to the Casino where Mrs. Blackett was spending the evening. At home, in Dallington, she had always been fond of going to bed early; yet now, according to this Frenchman, she was perhaps going to remain out till one o'clock—till one o'clock on a Sunday morning!

Monsieur Noir obligingly offered to show the stranger the way to Enghien's chief attraction, and a few minutes later found them on the edge of the pretty lake, which to-night, it being a hot evening, was dotted with tiny pleasure craft. Overhanging the lake, and rearing its large mass of building against the still, starry sky, stood the Casino, where reigns triumphantly the Goddess of Chance, and that, in spite of the efforts which the tradespeople of Paris are ever making to dislodge her from there.

As Oldchester walked slowly through the rooms where the humbler gambling games were in full swing, he told himself that the landlord of the Pension Noir had, of course, made a mistake. It was wildly improbable that Mabel was spending the evening in such a place as was this Casino, and forming part of the mixed crowd of gamblers who surged round the tables risking with anxious, calculating eyes their pieces of silver. Still, with characteristic legal thoroughness, he thought it worth while to go through all the rooms before giving up the search; and the unaccus-

tomed atmosphere and surroundings in which he found himself amused and interested, if they rather shocked him.

At last he found himself in the baccarat room—that is, in the inner sanctuary where the devotees of the fickle goddess risk gold instead of silver, but where the laws of chance, as every gambler knows, are far more honestly observed than at “little horses” or “roulette.”

In the baccarat room a good many of the men were in evening dress, and the women with them, if to Oldchester's eyes by no means desirable or reputably-looking companions, yet were in most cases handsome and showy looking—too handsome, too showy for the American lawyer's taste—indeed, he felt a thrill of disgust at the thought that Mabel Blackett could even be thought to be in such company.

Baccarat was going on at two long tables, and the crowd was naturally thicker there than anywhere else in the room. Feeling a certain growing interest in the sight of what he realized was really high play, Oldchester approached the farther of the two tables.

Slowly his eyes focused the various groups and single figures which formed a crowd two deep round the green cloth, and then, with a sudden shock of surprise, he saw Mabel Blackett sitting nearly opposite to where he himself was standing.

There are certain scenes, certain human groupings of individuals, which remain fixed forever against the screen of memory. Bill Oldchester was destined never to forget the particular group on which his tired eyes now rested with growing amazement and attention.

Mrs. Blackett was sitting at the baccarat table, next to the man who was acting as banker. She was evidently absorbed in the fortunes of the game, and she followed the slow falling of the fateful cards with rather feverish intentness.

Her small, gloved hands rested on the table, one of them loosely holding a tiny ivory rake; and on a bank note spread open on the green cloth before

her were two neat piles of gold, the one composed of twenty-franc pieces, the other of ten-franc pieces.

Oldchester, with a strange feeling of fear and anger clutching at his heart, told himself that he had never seen Mabel look as she looked to-night. She was more than pretty; she was beautiful, and above all alive—vividly alive. There was a bright color on her cheek, and a soft light shining in her eyes. The row of pearls which had occasioned the only serious difference he and she had ever had, rose and fell softly on the bosom of her black lace dress.

Oldchester also gradually became aware that Mrs. Blackett formed a center of attraction to those standing round the gambling table. Both the men and the women stared at her, some enviously, but more with kindly admiration, for beauty is sure of its tribute in any French audience, and Mabel Blackett to-night looked enchantingly lovely.

Now and again she turned and spoke in an eager, intimate fashion to a man sitting next her on her left, and for a moment Oldchester concentrated his attention on this man. Mabel Blackett's companion was obviously a foreigner; he was small and fair, and what could be seen of his evening clothes fitted scrupulously well. The American, looking at him with alien, jealous eyes, decided within himself that this Frenchman with whom Mabel seemed to be on such friendly terms was a foppish-looking fellow, not at all the sort of man she ought to have “picked up” on her travels.

Suddenly she raised her head, throwing it back with a graceful gesture, and Oldchester's eyes traveled on to the person who was standing just behind her, and to whom she had begun speaking with smiling animation. This was a woman—short, stout, and swarthy, dressed in a bright purple gown, and wearing a pale-gray bonnet which was singularly unbecoming to her red, massive face.

Mabel seemed also to include in her conversation a man who was standing next to the stout woman. He was tall and lanky, absurdly and unsuitably

dressed, to the American onlooker, in a gray alpaca suit and a shabby Panama hat. In his hand this man held a little book in which he noted down every turn in the game, and it was clear to Oldchester that, though he listened to Mrs. Blackett with civility, he was quite uninterested in what she was saying.

Very different was the attitude of the woman; she seemed deeply interested in Mabel's remarks, and she leaned forward familiarly on the back of the chair on which Mrs. Blackett was sitting, smiling broadly in a way that showed her large, strong teeth.

Oldchester thought them both queer, common-looking people, and he noticed that the Frenchman sitting next Mabel, the dandyish-looking fellow to whom she had been talking before, took no part at all in her present conversation. Once, indeed, he looked up and frowned, as if the talk going on just behind him disturbed him. When at last Mrs. Blackett turned again to the table, this man said something to her which at once made her take up two napoleons and a ten-franc piece from the pile of gold in front of her and place the coins within the ruled-off space reserved for the stakes.

Oldchester, staring at the little scene, felt as if he were in a nightmare—gazing at something which was not real, and which would vanish if looked at long enough.

To those who regard gambling as justifiable, provided the gambler's means allow of it, even to those who habitually see women indulging in games of chance, there will, of course, be something absurd in the point of view of Bill Oldchester. But to him the sight of the woman for whom he had always felt a very sincere respect, as well as a far more enduring and jealous affection than he quite realized, sitting there at a public gaming table, was a staggering, nay, a disgusting sight.

He reminded himself angrily that Mabel had a good income—so good an income that she very seldom spent it all in the course of any one year. Why,

therefore, should she wish to increase it? Above all, how could she bear to find herself in this queer, horrid crowd? Why allow herself to be contaminated by breathing the same air as some of the women who were there round her? She and the common, middle-aged woman standing behind her, who, by the way, was not playing, but only looking on, were the only "respectable" women in the room!

And then it was all so deliberate. Oldchester had once seen a man whom he greatly respected drunk, and the sight had ever remained with him. But, after all, a man may get drunk by accident, nay, it may almost be said that a man always gets drunk by accident. But in this matter Mabel Blackett knew very well what she was about.

With a thrill of genuine distress the lawyer told himself that she had evidently become a confirmed gambler; for it was with an assured, familiar gesture that she placed her money on the cloth—and then with what intelligent knowledge she followed the operations of the banker!

He watched her when her money was swept away, and noted the calm manner with which she immediately took five louis from her pile, and pushed them with her little rake well onto the green cloth.

But long before the dealer of the cards had uttered the fateful words: "*Le jeu est fait! Rien ne va plus!*" Mrs. Blackett uttered an exclamation under her breath, and hurriedly rose from the table. She had seen Oldchester—seen his eyes fixed upon her with a perplexed, angry look in them, and the look had made her wince.

As she made her way through the crowd—some one had quickly slipped into her vacant chair—Oldchester saw that she had won; that is, five louis had been added to her original stake; at once the money was swept up by the fair-haired Frenchman in evening dress with whom Mrs. Blackett had evidently been playing.

"Bill! You here? I had quite given you up! I thought you had missed the train—at any rate, I never thought you

would come out to Enghien as late as this!"

The bright color which was one of Mabel Blackett's chief physical attributes had faded from her cheeks; she looked pale, and her heart was beating uncomfortably. She would have given almost anything in the world for Bill Oldchester not to have come down and caught her like this—"caught" was the expression poor Mabel used to herself.

"I am so sorry," she went on breathlessly, "so very sorry! What a wretch you must have thought me! But I have got you such a nice room in a pension where I was myself for a little while. It's unlucky I couldn't get you anything with the Noirs—they're such nice people, and it's such a quiet, pleasant house."

Oldchester said nothing; he was still looking at her, trying to readjust his old ideas of her to her present environment. Then there came to them both a welcome diversion.

"Mab-bell, will you not introduce me to your friend?"

Madame Wachner had elbowed her way through the crowd to where Oldchester and Mabel were standing. Her husband lagged a little way behind, his eyes still following the play; even as his wife spoke, he made a note in the little book he held in his hand.

Mabel turned, relieved.

"Oh, Bill," she exclaimed, "this is Madame Wachner, who has been very kind to me since I came to Enghien."

They turned, and slowly walked down the room. Mabel instinctively fell behind, keeping step with Monsieur Wachner, while Oldchester and Madame Wachner walked in front.

The latter had already taken the measure of the quiet, stolid-looking American. She had seen him long before Mabel had done so, and had watched him with some attention, guessing almost at once that he must be the man Mrs. Blackett had expected would come to dinner.

"I suppose that this is your first visit to Enghien?" she said. "Very few of your countrymen come here, sir, but it is interesting, and it is curious—more

curious than Monte Carlo. It is not a place for our pretty friend"—she lowered her voice a little, but he heard her very clearly—"but, ah, she loves play now! Her friend, Madame Olsen, the Danish lady, was also a great lover of baccarat. But now the Danish lady 'as gone away. When Madame Blackett comes here, like this, at night, my husband and I—we are what you American people call old-fashioned folk—we come, too, not to play, oh, no—but *you* understand, just to look after her. She is so innocent, so young!"

Oldchester looked kindly at the speaker. It was very decent of her—nice and motherly—to take such an interest in poor Mabel and her delinquencies. Yes, that was the way to take the matter which had so shocked him. Mabel Blackett, after all, was a very young woman, and ridiculously innocent. He, Oldchester, knew that a great many nice people went to Monte Carlo; yes, and spent there sometimes a great deal more than they could afford, gambling at the tables. It was absurd to be angry with Mabel for doing what very many other people did in another place. He felt sincerely grateful to this fat, common-looking woman.

"It's very good of you to do that," he said awkwardly. "I mean it's good of you to accompany Mrs. Blackett here." He looked round him with distaste. "It certainly is no place for her to come to alone."

He was going to add something when Mabel came forward; the color had come back into her cheeks.

"Where's Count Paul?" she asked anxiously. "Sure he did not stay on at the table after we left?"

Madame Wachner shook her head slightly. She looked at Oldchester. It was a meaning look, and somehow it inspired him with prejudice against the person of whom Mabel had just spoken.

"Ah, here he is!" There was relief, nay, gladness ringing in Mrs. Blackett's voice.

The Comte De Poupel had hurried after them, and now he placed ten louis in Mabel's hand.

"Your winnings," he said briefly.

Then: "That means, does it not, madame, that you have made thirty-two louis this evening? I congratulate you."

Oldchester's prejudice grew unreasonably. Damn the fellow! Why should he congratulate Mrs. Blackett on having won what was, after all, other people's money? He acknowledged Mabel's introduction of her French friend very stiffly, and he was relieved when the count turned on his heel—relieved, and yet puzzled to see how troubled Mabel seemed to be; she actually tried to keep the Comte De Poupel by her side.

"Aren't you coming with us?" she said, in a tone of deep disappointment.

But he, bowing, answered: "No, madame. It is impossible."

CHAPTER VI.

Bill Oldchester stayed at Enghien three days—the three most uncomfortable days he had ever spent. For one thing, he found that he could not sleep. If he had not been the sensible man he prided himself on being, he would have been almost tempted to think that the bedroom he occupied at the pleasant Pension Malfait was haunted. Even on that first night, when he had been so tired after the long journey from England, he had lain awake, hour after hour, finding it impossible to sleep. And when at last he had fallen into a heavy, troubled slumber, he had been disturbed by unpleasant dreams—dreams in which Mabel Blackett played a part, though when he woke up he could not remember what it was she had done.

Although by the time he woke up it was broad daylight, with the sun streaming into the room through the chinks left by the thick curtains, he had waked with the strong feeling that there was some one in the room with him, and that odd impression that he was never alone when in that room never left him—indeed, it had grown stronger and stronger.

After two practically sleepless nights he asked to have the room changed, but the proprietor of the boarding house in-

formed him civilly that there was not another room vacant.

"You only have that apartment," he observed, "because of a lady, Madame Olsen, who left us, rather unexpectedly, a fortnight ago. We let at the beginning of each season for the whole season, and every room I have is occupied."

Oldchester had said nothing of all this to Mabel Blackett. For one thing, they were not on really good terms, for the morning after his arrival he and she had had a very sharp misunderstanding—to call it by no plainer name. On his expressing, as he thought very kindly, his surprise at finding her at such a place, Mabel, with heightened color, had at once put herself on the defensive, reminding him that she had a perfect right to go where she liked, and to do what she liked with her own money. Nay, more, she had even denied that there was the slightest harm in the kind of existence she was now leading, or in the play she indulged in at the Casino.

"Why, on the whole, I have actually won!" she had cried triumphantly.

And Oldchester, displeased, had looked at her in silence. It was not that he minded so much her losing her money—no doubt she could afford that; it was that she should enjoy winning.

Then her friendship with the Comte De Poupel—if indeed the fellow was a count at all—that also disturbed and astonished the American lawyer. Onlookers proverbially see most of the game, and Oldchester, much against his will, thought he saw that Mrs. Blackett was very fond of the Frenchman. It gradually became clear to him, for instance, that, though she did not mind gambling herself, she very much objected to the Comte De Poupel doing so. She did everything in her power to prevent his going to the Casino. So much Oldchester, with his perceptive faculties sharpened by a kind of sore jealousy, understood.

To the lawyer, Enghien seemed to have changed Mabel Blackett's whole nature; he was disagreeably aware that she was the center of attraction at Pen-

sion Noir; that is, that everybody was watching her—in fact, he soon became aware that he himself was being watched by some of the people there with covert amusement, and the fact made him uneasy and angry.

But Mabel was quite unaware of all this; she seemed only interested in two things in the world—in baccarat and in the Comte De Poupel. She also discussed at great length with Oldchester the problem of Madame Olsen's disappearance, and this annoyed him, for he could not make out why Mabel should care one way or the other about a person whom she had known only a few weeks.

From what Madame Wachner told him—and Oldchester was perfectly thrown a good deal in the company of Madame Wachner—this Danish lady had not been a very suitable acquaintance for Mabel; indeed, it was through this Anna Olsen that Mrs. Blackett had come to Enghien. Her disappearance had been a very good thing. But for that perhaps poor Mabel would have gone on to Monte Carlo for the winter, and would have become a confirmed gambler—so at least Madame Wachner seemed to think.

On what was to be the last day of Oldchester's unsatisfactory visit to Enghien, the people in Mabel's pension all went for a picnic in the Forest of Montmorency, and after they had had luncheon Oldchester had been the unwilling witness of a curious, little scene.

Leaving the others still sitting on the grass together, he had got up and strolled away in search of Mabel and the Comte De Poupel. For a while he had searched for them in vain; then, unexpectedly, he had seen them—seen them some few moments before they became aware of his presence.

They were standing opposite one another in a little glade; the count was talking rapidly and very earnestly in French, while Mabel listened to him with downcast eyes. Suddenly she looked up and put out her hand, very deliberately. The count took the little hand in his, and held it for what

seemed to the onlooker a long time—in reality perhaps for thirty seconds—then, after raising it to his lips, he let it go.

Oldchester had turned on his heel, walking rapidly away, careless as to whether they were aware or not of his eavesdropping. How odious it was to see Mabel flirting! He had never known her do such a thing at home, in America. Both as a girl and since her widowhood, she had been reserved and staid beyond her years.

But Bill Oldchester was destined to yet another surprise. The morning of the day he was leaving Enghien, the Comte De Poupel came up to him.

"I also am leaving this place to-day," he said, "and I also am going to Switzerland. Perhaps, Mr. Oldchester, we might travel part of the way together."

For the first time the American looked cordially at the Frenchman, although his brow clouded somewhat when the count added very earnestly—more earnestly than the occasion warranted:

"I do wish we could persuade Mrs. Blackett to come with us. Enghien is not a nice place for her to be in alone by herself."

But Mabel refused to leave Enghien, and Oldchester and she had a painful discussion, during which she begged him passionately to mind his own business, and to leave her to do what she thought best for her own comfort and happiness.

"Can't you see that I am miserable?" she had flashed out. "The little amusement—well, yes, the gambling—you grudge me is the only thing that takes me out of myself!"

He had been present when she had made an appointment with the Wachners to meet them at the Casino that very evening, and then to go home with them to supper, and he had felt vaguely glad that they, at any rate, were there to look after her.

She had accompanied both travelers to the station, talking a great deal and laughing gayly, more animated than Oldchester had ever seen her. And at the very last, on the platform, she had

suddenly become far more like her old self.

"I don't suppose I shall really stay here very long, after all." Such had been her last whispered words to Bill Oldchester.

To the Comte De Poupel she had simply given her hand, silently.

CHAPTER VII.

It was half-past eight, and for the moment the Casino was very empty, for the afternoon players had left, and the evening *série*, as Paul De Poupel called them, had not yet arrived.

"And now," said Madame Wachner suddenly, "is it not time for us to go and 'ave our little supper?"

She had been watching her husband and Mabel Blackett playing at baccarat; both of them had won, not very much, but enough to make Mabel at least feel pleasantly excited.

Mrs. Blackett turned round, smiling. It was nice of the Wachners to ask her back to supper at the Châlet des Muguet. It would have been lonely this evening at the Pension Noir. Mabel felt curiously deserted—the thought that Paul De Poupel would leave Enghien had never occurred to her.

"I'm quite ready." And then addressing herself more particularly to Madame Wachner, who she knew disliked walking: "Shall we take a carriage?" she asked diffidently.

Mabel meant the carriage to be her share of the evening's junketing.

"No, no," said Monsieur Wachner shortly. "There is no need to take a carriage to-night; it is so fine, and besides, it is not very far."

And so the three walked away together from the *établissement*—Mabel with her light, springing step keeping pace with "L'Ami Fritz," while his wife lagged a step behind. But as usual the man remained silent, while the two women talked. To-night, however, Madame Wachner did not show her usual tact; her mind seemed running on the Comte De Poupel.

"I am glad he 'as gone away," she said. "He is so supercilious—so dif-

ferent to that excellent Mr. Oldchester. Perhaps you will find them both in America, together, when you go back!"

Mabel made no answer; she thought it probable that she would never see the Comte De Poupel again, and the conviction hurt her shrewdly. It was painful to be reminded of him now, in this way, and by a woman who she knew disliked him as much as he disliked her.

To-night, in the gathering darkness, the way to the Châlet des Muguet seemed longer than usual—far longer than it had seemed the last time she had gone there, but on that occasion Paul De Poupel had been her companion.

At last the three walkers came within sight of the little, white gate. How strangely lonely the house looked standing back in the neglected, untidy garden!

"I wonder," Mabel Blackett looked up at her silent companion—"L'Ami Fritz" had not opened his lips a single time during the walk from the Casino—"I wonder that you and Madame Wachner are not afraid to leave the house alone for so many hours of each day. Your servant leaves after lunch, doesn't she?"

"There is nothing to steal," he answered shortly. "We always carry all our money about with us—all sensible people do so at Enghien and at Monte Carlo."

Madame Wachner was now on Mabel's other side.

"Yes," she said rather breathlessly; "that is so, and I hope that you, dear friend, followed the advice we gave you about that matter."

"Of course I did," said Mabel, smiling. "I always carry my money about with me, strapped round my waist in that pretty, little leather bag which you gave me. At first it wasn't very comfortable, but I have got quite used to it now."

"That is right!" said the other heartily. "That is quite right! There are rogues in every pension, perhaps even in the Pension Noir, if we knew everything!" went on Madame Wachner, laughing her hearty, jovial laugh. "By

the way, Ami Fritz, have you written that letter to the Pension Noir?" She turned to Mabel. "We are anxious to get a room in your pension for a friend."

Mabel felt, she could hardly say why, that the question had extremely annoyed Monsieur Wachner.

"Of course, I have written the letter," he snapped out. "Do I ever forget anything?"

"I fear there is no room vacant," Mabel said. "And yet—well, I suppose they have not had time to let the Comte De Poupel's room. They only knew he was going this morning. You need not trouble to write a letter, I will give the message."

"Ah, but the person in question may arrive to-night," said Madame Wachner. "No, we are arranging to send the letter by a cabman who will call for it."

Monsieur Wachner pushed open the white gate, and all three began walking up through the garden. The mantle of night now draped every straggling bush, every wilted flower, and the little wilderness was filled with delicious pungent night scents.

Mabel smiled in the darkness; there seemed something so primitive, so simple in keeping the key of one's front door outside, under the mat. And yet the foolish, prejudiced people spoke of Enghien as a dangerous spot, as being a plague pit!

But before they had time to look for the key, the door was opened by the day servant.

"What are you doing here?" asked Madame Wachner angrily. There was a note of dismay, as well as of anger, in her voice.

The woman began to excuse herself volubly.

"I thought I might be of some use, madame. I thought I might help you with all the last details."

"There was no necessity—none at all for doing anything of the kind," said Madame Wachner, speaking very quickly. "You had been paid! You had your present! However, as you are here, you may as well lay a third place

in the dining room; for, as you see, we have brought madame back to have a little supper. She will only stay a very few moments; she has to be home at her pension by ten o'clock."

Mabel, as is often the case with those who have been much thrown with French people, could understand French much better than she could speak it, and what Madame Wachner had just said surprised and puzzled her. It was quite untrue that she had to be back at the Pension Noir by ten o'clock—for the matter of that, she could stay out as long and as late as she liked, the more so that her host would certainly escort her back.

Then again, although the arrangement that she should come to supper tonight had been made the day before, Madame Wachner had evidently forgotten to tell her servant, for only two places were laid in the dining room, into which they all three walked through on entering the house. On the dining table stood a lighted lamp, and propped up against it was a letter addressed to Madame Noir in a peculiar, large handwriting. "L'Ami Fritz" muttered something, and, taking it up hurriedly, put it into his breast pocket.

"I brought that letter out of monsieur's bedroom," observed the servant. "I feared monsieur had forgotten it. Would monsieur like me to take it to the Pension Noir on my way home?"

"No," said Monsieur Wachner shortly. "There is no need for you to do that."

His wife called out to him imperiously, from the dark passage: "Fritz! Fritz! Come here a moment. I want you."

He hurried out of the room, and Mabel Blackett and the servant were left alone together for a few moments.

The woman went to the buffet, and took up a plate; she came and placed it noisily on the table, and under cover of the sound: "Do not stay here, madame," she whispered. "Come away with me. Say you want me to accompany you to the Pension Noir."

Mabel stared at her distrustfully. The servant had a disagreeable face; a cun-

ning, avaricious look was in her eyes, or so the young American fancied. No doubt she remembered the couple of francs given her, or rather extorted by her, the week before.

"I will not say more," the woman went on, speaking very quickly, and under her breath. "But I am an honest woman, and these people frighten me. Still I am not one to want embarrassments with the police."

And Mabel suddenly remembered that those were exactly the same words which had been used by Anna Olsen's landlady in connection with Anna's disappearance. How frightened French people seemed to be of the police!

The servant again moved away; she took up the plate she had just placed on the table, and to Mabel's mingled disgust and amusement began rubbing it vigorously with her elbow.

Monsieur Wachner came into the room.

"That will do, that will do, Annette," he said patronizingly. "Come here, my good woman. I desire to give you a pretty little gift from myself. So here is twenty francs. And now good night."

"*Merci, m'sieur.*"

Without again looking at Mabel, the woman went out of the room. A moment later the front door slammed behind her.

"My wife discovered that it is Annette's fête day to-morrow. No doubt that was why she stayed on to-night."

Monsieur Wachner came in.

"Oh, those French people!" she exclaimed. "How greedy they are for money! But—well, the woman has earned her present very fairly." She shrugged her shoulders.

"May I go and take off my hat?" asked Mabel.

She left the room before Madame Wachner could answer her, and walked down the short, dark passage.

The door of the moonlit kitchen was ajar, and, to her surprise, Mabel Blackett saw that a trunk, corded and even labeled, stood in the middle of the floor.

Close to the trunk was a large piece of sacking. Was it possible that the Wachners, too, were leaving Enghien?

If so, how very odd not to have told her!

As she opened the door of the bedroom, Madame Wachner came up behind her.

"Wait a moment," she said breathlessly. "I had better get a light. You see we have been rather upset to-day, for L'Ami Fritz has to go away for two or three days, and that is a great affair—we are seldom separated."

"The moon is so bright I can see quite well."

Mabel was taking off her hat; she put it, together with a little fancy bag in which she kept the silver she played with at the gambling tables, on Madame Wachner's bed. She felt vaguely uncomfortable, for even as Madame Wachner had spoken she had become aware that the bedroom was almost entirely cleared of everything belonging to its occupant.

As they came back into the dining room, Monsieur Wachner, who was already sitting down at table, looked up.

"Words—words—words!" he exclaimed harshly. "Instead of talking so much, why do you not both sit down and eat your suppers? I am hungry."

Mabel had never heard him speak in such a tone before, but his wife answered quite good-humoredly:

"You forget, Fritz, that the cabman is coming. Till he has come and gone, we shall not have peace."

And sure enough, within a moment of saying those words, there came a sound of steps on the path in the garden. Monsieur Wachner got up, and went out of the room. He opened the front door, and Mabel overheard a few words of the colloquy:

"Yes, you are to take it now at once. Just leave it at the Pension Noir. You will come for us—you will come; that is, for me"—monsieur raised his voice—"to-morrow morning at half-past six. I wish to catch the seven-ten train to Paris."

Mabel heard the man's answering "*Bien, m'sieur.*"

But "L'Ami Fritz" did not come back at once. He went out into the garden

and down the gate. When he came back again, he put a large key on the table.

"There!" he said, with a sigh of satisfaction. "Now there will be nothing to disturb us any more."

They all three sat down at the round dining table. To Mabel's surprise, it was a very simple meal. There was only one small dish of cold meat. Always before when Mabel Blackett had been to supper there had been two or three tempting dishes, and some dainty *friandises* as well, the whole procured from the excellent confectioner who drives such a roaring trade at Enghien. To-night, in addition to a few slices of cold tongue, there was only a little fruit.

"L'Ami Fritz" helped first his wife and himself largely, then Mabel more frugally. It was a very slight matter, the more so that he was notoriously forgetful, being ever, according to his wife, absorbed in his calculations and "systems." But, all the same, this odd lack of good manners on her host's part added to Mabel's feeling of strangeness and discomfort.

Indeed, the Wachners were both very unlike their usual selves this evening. Madame Wachner had suddenly become very serious, her face was set in rather grim, grave lines; twice as Mabel was eating the little piece of galantine which had been placed on her plate, she looked up and caught her hostess' eyes fixed on her with a curious, alien scrutiny.

When they had almost finished the meat which was on their plates, Madame Wachner said suddenly:

"Ami Fritz, you have forgotten to mix the salad! You will find what is necessary in the drawer behind you."

Monsieur Wachner got up, and, silently pulling the drawer of the buffet open, he took out of it a wooden spoon and fork; then he came back to the table, and began silently mixing the salad.

The last two times Mabel had been at the Châlet des Muguet, her host, in deference to her American taste, had put a large admixture of vinegar in the salad dressing, but this time she saw

that he soused the lettuce leaves with oil.

At last: "Will you have some salad, Mrs. Blackett?" he said brusquely.

"No," she said. "Not to-night, thank you."

And she looked across at Madame Wachner, expecting to see in the older woman's face a humorous appreciation of the fact that "L'Ami Fritz" had forgotten her well-known horror of oil, for Mabel's dislike of a French salad ingredient had long been a little joke among the three, nay, among the four, for Anna Olsen had been there the last time Mabel had had supper with the Wachners—and it had been such a merry meal!

To-night no meaning smile met hers; instead, she saw that odd, grave, considering look on the older woman's face.

Suddenly Madame Wachner held out her plate across the table, and her husband heaped it up with the oily mixture. Then he took up one of the two remaining pieces of meat that were on the dish, and placed it on his wife's plate. He offered nothing more to Mabel. It was such a little thing, and yet, taken in connection with their silence and odd manner, this omission struck her with a kind of fear, with fear and with pain. She felt so hurt that the tears came into her eyes.

Both husband and wife were now eating voraciously. There was a long moment's pause; then:

"Do you not feel well?" asked Madame Wachner harshly. "Or are you grieving for the Comte De Poupel?"

Her voice had become guttural, full of coarse and cruel malice.

Mabel Blackett pushed her chair back, and rose to her feet.

"I should like to go home," she said quietly. "It is getting late. I can make my way back quite well without Monsieur Wachner's escort."

She saw her host shrug his shoulders. He made a face at his wife; it expressed annoyance, nay more, extreme disapproval.

Madame Wachner also got up. She laid her hand on Mabel's shoulder.

"Come, come," she said, this time

quite kindly, "you must not be cross with me, dear friend! I was only laughing, I was only what you call in America 'teasing.' The truth is, I am very vexed and upset that our supper is not better. I told that fool Frenchwoman to get in something nice. She disobeyed me. But now L'Ami Fritz is going to make us some good coffee. After we have had it, you shall go away if you wish."

Mabel Blackett sat down again. After all, as Paul De Poupel had truly said, not once but many times, the Wachners were not very refined people. And then she, Mabel, was tired and low-spirited to-night; perhaps she had imagined the change in their manner which had so surprised, nay, almost frightened her. Now Madame Wachner was quite her old self; indeed, she was heaping all the cherries which were in the dessert dish on her guest's plate, in spite of Mabel's smiling protest.

"L'Ami Fritz" got up, and left the room. He was going into the kitchen to make the coffee.

"Mr. Oldchester was telling me of your valuable pearls," said Madame Wachner pleasantly. "I was surprised! What a lot of money to hang round one's neck! But it is worth it, if one has so lovely a neck as has the little Mabel. May I look at them, or do you never take them off?"

Mabel unclasped the string of pearls, and laid it on the table.

"Yes, they are nice," she said. "I always wear them, even at night. Many people have a knot made between each pearl, for that of course makes the danger of losing them much less should the string break. But mine are not knotted, for a lady once told me that it made the pearls hang much less prettily; she said it would be quite safe if I had them restrung every six months."

Madame Wachner reverently took up the pearls in her large hand; she seemed to be weighing them.

"How heavy they are," she observed.

"Yes," said Mabel, "you can always tell a real pearl by its weight."

"And to think," went on her hostess musingly, "that each of these tiny balls

is worth—how much is it worth?—at least five or six 'undred francs, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Mabel again, "they have greatly increased in value during the last few years. You see, pearls are the only really fashionable gems just now."

"I suppose they are worth more together than separately?" said Madame Wachner, still in that thoughtful, considering tone.

"Oh, I don't know that," said Mabel, smiling. "Of course these are beautifully matched. I got them by a piece of good luck, without having to pay—well, what I suppose one would call the middleman's profit. I just paid what I should have done at an auction."

"And you paid? Two—three thousand dollars?" asked Madame Wachner, fixing her small, dark, bright eyes on the fair American's face.

"Oh, rather more than that." Mabel grew a little red. "But, as I said just now, they are always increasing in value. Even Mr. Oldchester, who did not approve of my getting these pearls, admits that."

Through the open door she thought she heard Monsieur Wachner coming back down the passage. So she suddenly took the pearls out of the other woman's hand, and clasped the string about her neck again.

"L'Ami Fritz" came into the room. He was holding rather awkwardly a little tray, on which were two cups—one a small cup, the other a large cup, both filled to the brim with black coffee. He put the small cup before his guest, the large cup before his wife.

"I hope you do not mind having a small cup," he said solemnly. "I remember that you do not care to take a great deal of coffee."

Mabel looked up.

"Oh, dear," she said, "I ought to have told you before! I won't have any coffee to-night. Coffee is very bad for me. The last time I took some I lay awake all night."

"Oh, but you must take some." Madame Wachner spoke good-humoredly, but with great determination. "The small amount you have in that little cup

wili not hurt you; and, besides, it is a special coffee; L'Ami Fritz's own mixture."

She laughed heartily. And again Mabel noticed that Monsieur Wachner looked at his wife with a fixed, rather angry look, as much as to say: "Why are you always laughing? Why can't you be serious sometimes?"

"But honestly, to-night, I would rather not." Mabel had suddenly seen a vision of herself lying wide awake during long hours—hours which, as she knew by experience, generally bring to the sleepless worrying thoughts. "No, no, I will not have any coffee to-night," she repeated.

"Yes, yes, dear friend, you really must." Madame Wachner spoke very persuasively. "I should be really sorry if you did not take your coffee—indeed, it would make me think you were angry with us because of the very bad supper we have given you. L'Ami Fritz would not have taken the trouble to make coffee for his old wife; he has made it for you, only for you; he will be hurt if you do not take it."

The coffee did look very tempting. Mabel had always disliked coffee in America, but somehow French coffee was quite different; it had an entirely different taste to that which the ladies of Dallington pressed on their guests after dinner at their solemn dinner parties.

She lifted the pretty little cup to her lips. The coffee had a rather curious taste; it was slightly bitter—decidedly not so nice as that to which she was accustomed to drink each day after *déjeuner* at the Pension Noir. Surely it would be very foolish to risk a bad night for a small cup of indifferent coffee!

She put the cup down, and pushed it away.

"Please don't ask me to take it!" she said. "It really is very bad for me."

Madame Wachner shrugged her shoulders with an angry gesture.

"Fritz," she said imperiously, "will you please come with me for a moment into the next room? I have something to ask you."

Silently he obeyed his wife, and a moment later Mabel, left alone, could hear them talking eagerly to one another in that strange, unknown tongue in which they sometimes—not often—addressed one another.

Mabel got up from her chair. She felt a sudden eager desire to slip away. For a moment she even thought of leaving the house without saying good night, even without waiting for her hat and scarf. And then, with a strange sinking of the heart, she remembered that the little white gate was locked.

But in no case would she have had time to do what she had thought of doing, for her host and hostess were now back in the room.

Madame Wachner sat down again at the dining table.

"One moment," she said rather breathlessly. "Just wait till I have finished my coffee, Mab-bel, and then L'Ami Fritz will escort you home."

Monsieur Wachner was paying no attention either to his guest or to his wife. He took up the chair on which he had been sitting, and placed it out of the way near the door. Then he lifted the lamp off the table, and put it on the buffet; as he did so, Mabel, looking up, saw the shadow of his tall figure thrown grotesquely, hugely, against the opposite wall of the room.

"Take the cloth off the table," he said quickly in French.

And his wife, gulping down the last drops of her coffee, got up and obeyed him.

Mabel suddenly realized that they were getting ready for something—that they wanted the room cleared.

As with quick, deft fingers Madame Wachner folded up the cloth, she said curtly:

"As you are not taking any coffee, Mab-bel, perhaps it is time for you now to get up and go away."

Mabel looked across at the speaker, and reddened deeply. She felt very angry. Never in the course of her pleasant, easy, prosperous life had any one ventured to dismiss her in this fashion from their house. She rose to her feet.

And then in a moment there occurred that which transformed her anger into agonized fear and amazement. The back of her neck was grazed by something sharp and cold. She gave a smothered cry. Her string of pearls had parted in two, and the pearls were now falling, one by one with dull thuds, and rolling all over the floor.

Instinctively she bent down, but as she did so she heard the man behind her make a quick movement. She straightened herself, and looked sharply round. "L'Ami Fritz," still holding the small pair of nail scissors in his hand with which he had snapped asunder her necklace, was in the act of taking out something that looked like a very short croquet mallet from the drawer of the buffet.

Mabel Blackett's nerves steadied; her mind became curiously collected and clear.

There leaped on her the knowledge that this man and woman meant to kill her—to kill her for the sake of the pearls which were still bounding along the floor, and for the small sum of money which she carried slung in the leather bag below her waist.

"L'Ami Fritz" stood staring at her; he had put his hand—the hand holding the thing he had taken out of the drawer—behind his back. He was very pale; the sweat had broken out on his sallow, thin face.

For a horrible moment there floated across Mabel's subconscious mind the thought of Anna Olsen, and of what she now knew to have been Anna Olsen's fate.

But she put that thought away from her determinedly. The instinct of self-preservation possessed her wholly. Already, in far less time than it would have taken to formulate the words, she had made up her mind to speak, and she knew exactly what she meant to say.

"It does not matter about my pearls," she said quietly. Her voice shook a little, but she spoke in her usual tone. "If you are going into Paris to-morrow morning, perhaps you would take them to be restrung."

The man looked questioningly across at his wife.

"Yes, that sounds a good plan," he said in his guttural voice.

"No," exclaimed Madame Wachner decidedly, "that will not do at all! We must not run that risk! The pearls must be found now, at once." She made a gesture as if she also meant to bend down and seek for them. "Stoop!" she said imperiously. "Stoop, Mabel! Help me to find your pearls."

But Mabel Blackett made no attempt to obey the order. Instead she gradually edged toward the closed window. At last she stood with her back to it, with Madame Wachner rather to her right, Wachner to her left.

"No," she said, "I will not stoop and pick up my pearls now, Madame Wachner. It will be easier to look in the daylight. Monsieur Wachner will find them to-morrow morning."

There came a tone of pleading, and for the first time of pitiful fear, in her voice.

"It is not his business to find your pearls," exclaimed Madame Wachner harshly.

She stepped forward, and gripped Mabel by the arm, pulling her violently forward. As she did so she made a sign to her husband, and he pushed a chair quickly between Mrs. Blackett and the window, thus forcing her to lose her point of vantage.

But Mabel was young and lithe; she kept her feet.

But though she kept her feet, she knew with a cold, reasoning knowledge that she was very near to death; that it was only a question of minutes—unless—unless she could make the man and woman before her understand that they would make far more money by allowing her to live than by killing her now, to-night, for the value of the pearls that lay scattered on the floor, and the small—the pitifully small—sum in her leather waist bag.

"If you will let me go," she said desperately, "I swear I will give you everything I have in the world!"

But the woman's grip on her shoulder became heavier, more cruel; she

was trying to force Mabel down onto her knees.

"What do you take us for?" she said furiously. "We want nothing from you—nothing at all!"

She looked across at her husband, and there burst from her lips a torrent of words uttered in the language unknown to those who knew the Wachners.

Mabel listened with painful attention. She was trying to catch the drift of what was being said. Alas! She knew only too well; and there fell on her ear, twice repeated, the name Oldsen.

Slowly Wachner moved a step forward. Mabel looked at him, an agonized appeal in her eyes. He was smiling, a nervous grin zigzagging across his large, thin-lipped mouth.

"You should have taken the coffee," he muttered. "It would have saved us all much trouble!"

He put out his left hand, and the long, strong fingers closed, tentaclewise, on her slender shoulder. His right hand he kept still hidden behind his back.

CHAPTER VIII.

The great open-air restaurant in the Champs Elysées was full of foreigners. Paul De Poupel and Bill Oldchester were sitting opposite to one another on the broad terrace dotted with small tables embowered in flowering shrubs. They were both smoking, the American a cigar, the Frenchman a cigarette. It was now half-past eight. Instead of taking the first express for Switzerland, they had decided to have dinner in Paris, and to take a later train.

"I do not feel happy at our having left Mrs. Blackett alone at Enghien, Mr. Oldchester."

Paul De Poupel took the cigarette out of his mouth, and put it down on the table.

Oldchester looked up. His nerves were on edge. What did the Frenchman mean by saying that?

"I don't see what else we could do," he said shortly.

He had no wish to discuss Mabel and

her affairs with this foreigner, however oddly intimate Mrs. Blackett had allowed herself to get with the Comte De Poupel.

"Enghien is a very queer place," observed the Comte De Poupel meditatively.

Oldchester thought the remark too obvious to answer. Of course Enghien was a queer place; to put it plainly, little better than a gambling hell. But it was rather strange to hear the Comte De Poupel saying so—a real case if ever there was one, of Satan rebuking sin. But at last:

"Of course it is," he said irritably. "I can't think what made Mrs. Blackett go there in the first instance."

"She was brought there by the Danish lady she met in a hotel in Paris, and who disappeared so strangely," answered Paul De Poupel quickly. "It is not the place for a young lady to be by herself."

Bill Oldchester tilted back the chair on which he was sitting. Once more he asked himself what on earth the fellow was driving at? Was all this talk simply a preliminary to the count's saying that he was not going to Switzerland, after all; that he was going back to Enghien in order to take care of Mabel? What an absurd idea!

Quite suddenly the young American felt shaken by a very primitive, and to him hitherto a very unfamiliar feeling, that of jealousy. Damn it—he wouldn't have that! Of course he was no longer in love with Mabel Blackett. All that sort of nonsense had been over long ago, but he, Bill Oldchester, was her trustee and lifelong friend; he must see to it that she didn't make a fool of herself either by gambling away her money—the good money the late George Blackett had toiled so many years to make—or—or—worse by far, by making some wretched foreign marriage.

He stared at his companion suspiciously. Was it likely that a real count would lead the sort of life this man De Poupel was leading, in a place like Enghien?

"If you really feel like that, I think I'd better give up my trip to Switzer-

land, and go back to Enghien to-morrow morning."

He stared hard at the Comte De Poupel, and noted with sarcastic amusement the other's appearance—so foppish, so effeminate to American eyes. Particularly did he regard with scorn the count's yellow silk socks, which matched his lemon-colored tie and silk pocket handkerchief. Fancy starting for a long night journey in such a "get-up"! Well! Perhaps women liked that sort of thing, but he would never have thought Mabel was that sort of woman.

A change came over Paul De Poupel's face. There was unmistakable relief, nay, more, even joy in the voice with which the Frenchman answered:

"That is excellent! That is quite right! That is first rate! Yes, yes, Mr. Oldchester, you go back there. It is not right that Mrs. Blackett should be by herself. It may seem absurd to you, but, believe me, Enghien is not a safe spot in which to leave an unprotected woman. She has not one single friend, not a person to whom she could turn to for advice—excepting, of course, the excellent Noirs, who keep the pension, and they naturally desire to keep their good guest."

"There's that funny old couple—that man called Fritz something or other, and his wife," observed Oldchester.

Paul De Poupel shook his head.

"Those people are not nice people," he said decidedly. "They appear to be very fond of Mrs. Blackett, but they are only fond of themselves. They are adventurers, 'out for the stuff,' as you Americans say. The man is the worst type of gambler, the type that believes he is going to get rich, rich beyond the dreams of avarice, by a 'system.' Such a man will do anything for money. I believe they knew far more of the disappearance of Madame Olsen than any one else did. I have suspected"—he dropped his voice, and leaned over the table—"nay, I have felt sure from the very first, that the Wachners are blackmailers. I am convinced that they discovered something to that poor lady's discredit and—after making her pay—

drove her away. Just before she left Enghien they were trying to raise money at the Casino money changer's on some worthless shares. But after Madame Olsen's disappearance they had plenty of gold and notes."

Oldchester looked again at his companion. At last he was really impressed. Blackmailing is a word which has a very ugly sound in an American lawyer's ears.

"If that is really true," he said suddenly, "I almost feel as if I ought to go back to Enghien to-night. I suppose there are heaps of trains."

"You might at all events wait till tomorrow morning," said Paul De Poupel dryly.

He also had suddenly experienced a touch of that jealous feeling which had surprised Oldchester but a few moments before. But he was a Frenchman, and he was familiar with the sensation—nay, he welcomed it. "To think," he said to himself, "that I am still capable of jealousy! Eh! Eh! I am not so old as I thought I was!"

Mabel Blackett seemed to have come very near to him in the last few moments. He saw her blue eyes brimming with tears, her pretty mouth trembling; her hand lay once more in his hand.

Had he grasped that kind, firm little hand, an entirely new life had been within his reach. A sensation of immeasurable loss came over Paul De Poupel.

But no—he had been right, quite right. He liked her too well to risk making her as unhappy as he might make her, as he would be tempted to make her, if she became his wife.

Paul De Poupel took off his hat. He remained silent for what seemed to his American companion quite a long time.

"By the way, what is Mrs. Blackett doing to-night?" he said at last.

"To-night?" said Oldchester. "Let me see—why, to-night she is spending the evening with those very people of whom you were speaking just now. I heard her arrange it with them this morning." He added stiffly: "I doubt

if your impression is a right one. They seem to me a respectable couple."

Paul De Poupel shrugged his shoulders. He felt suddenly uneasy, afraid he hardly knew of what. There was no risk that Mabel Blackett would fall a victim to blackmailers—she had nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to fear—but still he hated to think that she was, even now, alone with this sinister man and woman of whom he had formed such a bad impression.

He took his watch out of his pocket.

"There's a train for Enghien at a quarter to ten," he said slowly. "That would be an excellent train for you—for us to take."

"Then are you thinking of going back to Enghien, too?" There was a sarcastic inflection in the American's voice.

"Yes."

The Comte De Poupel looked at Oldchester significantly, and his look said: "Take care, my friend. We do not allow a man to sneer at another man in this country unless he is willing to stand certain unpleasant consequences."

During the short train journey they hardly spoke to one another. Each thought that the other was doing a strange thing—and a thing which the thinker could have done much better if left to himself.

At Enghien station they jumped into a victoria.

"I suppose we had better drive straight to the Pension Noir," Oldchester said hesitatingly.

"Yes. And I will go on somewhere else as soon as I know you have seen Mrs. Blackett. She should be back from the Wachners by now. By the way, Mr. Oldchester, you had better ask to have my room to-night; we know that it is disengaged. Please do not tell her that I came back with you. Where would be the use? Perhaps I will go back to Paris to-night."

The Comte De Poupel spoke in a constrained, preoccupied voice.

"But aren't you coming in? Won't you stay at Enghien at least till to-morrow?"

Oldchester's voice unwittingly became far more cordial; if he did not wish to see Mabel, why had he insisted on coming to-night?

The veranda of the Pension Noir was still brightly lit up, for late hours are the rule in Enghien. As they drew up before the door, the Comte De Poupel suddenly grasped the other's hand.

"Good luck!" he exclaimed. "Good luck, fortunate man!"

Oldchester was rather touched as well as surprised. But what queer, emotional fellows Frenchmen are, to be sure! This Paul De Poupel had evidently been a little bit in love with Mabel, but he was evidently quite willing to think of her married to another fellow. But—but Oldchester was no longer so sure that he wanted to marry Mabel. She was different somehow—another Mabel to the one he had always known.

"I'll just come out, and tell you that it's all right," he said a little awkwardly. "But I wish you'd come in, if only for a minute. Mrs. Blackett would be so pleased to see you."

"No, no," muttered the other. "Believe me, she would not!"

Oldchester turned, and walked through into the veranda. It was empty save for the landlord, a voluble southerner, who, as a rule, saw but little of his guests, for he was not ashamed of acting as chef in his own kitchen, leaving the rest of the management of the prosperous pension to his wife. As it happened, however, Madame Noir had had to go away for two or three days.

"I want to know," said Oldchester abruptly, "if you can let me have a room for to-night? The room of the Comte De Poupel is, I believe, disengaged?"

"I will see, monsieur—I will inquire!"

Monsieur Noir did not know what to make of this big American who had come in out of the night, bringing no luggage with him but one little bag. Then he suddenly remembered; why, of course this was the friend of the pretty, charming, wealthy Madame Blackett, the gentleman who had been staying

during the past few days at the Pension Malfait.

Then, this Mr. Oldchester's departure from Enghien had been a *fausse sortie*? A ruse to get rid of the Comte De Poupel, who was also in love with the American widow? Ah! Ah! Monsieur Noir felt much amused. But the American's tale of love was not to run smoothly, after all, for now another complication had arisen.

"Yes, yes," he said, "it is all right! I had forgotten! As you say, monsieur, the Comte De Poupel's room is now empty, but—" He hesitated, and with a sly look added: "Indeed, we have another room empty to-night—a far finer room, the room of Madame Blackett."

"The room of Mrs. Blackett?" echoed Oldchester. "Has Mrs. Blackett changed her room?"

"Oh, no, monsieur. She left Enghien this very evening. I have but just now received a letter from her."

The little man could hardly keep serious. Oh! Those Americans who are said to be so cold! They also when in love behave like other people!

"Ah, what a charming lady, monsieur! Madame Noir and I shall miss her greatly. We hoped to see her for all the summer. Perhaps she will come back, now monsieur has returned."

"Left Enghien!" repeated Oldchester incredulously. "But that's impossible! It isn't more than three or four hours since we said good-by to her here. She had no intention of leaving Enghien then. Do you say you've had a letter from her? Will you please show it to me?"

"Certainly, monsieur."

Monsieur Noir, followed by the American, trotted off into his office. Slowly, methodically, he began to turn over the papers on the writing table. He felt quite lost without his wife, and just a little uncomfortable. There had evidently been a lovers' quarrel between these two peculiar American people. What a pity that the gentleman, who had very properly returned to beg the lady's pardon, found his little bird flown!

In such poetic terms did Monsieur Noir in his own mind refer to Mabel Blackett. Her presence in his house had delighted his southern, sentimental mind; he felt her to be so decorative, as well as so lucrative, a guest to his beloved pension. Mrs. Blackett had never questioned any of the extras he had put on her weekly bill. And she had never become haggard and cross as other ladies did who lost money at the Casino. Though he was very sorry she had left the Pension Noir, he was gratified by the fact that she had lived up to his ideal of her, for, though Madame Blackett had paid her weekly bill only two days before, she had actually sent him a hundred francs to pay for the two days' board; the balance to be distributed among the servants.

There could surely be no harm in giving this odd-looking American the lady's letter? Still, Monsieur Noir was sorry that he had not Madame Noir at his elbow to make the decision for him.

"Here it is," he said at last, taking a piece of paper out of a drawer. "I must have put it there for Madame Noir to read it on her return. It is a very gratifying letter—monsieur will see that for himself."

Oldchester took the folded-up piece of note paper out of the little Frenchman's hand with a strange feeling of misgiving. Then, glancing at the letter: "You have made a mistake," he said quickly. "This is not Mrs. Blackett's handwriting."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, it is certainly Mrs. Blackett's letter. You see there is the lady's signature written as plainly as possible."

Oldchester looked to where the man's fat finger pointed. Yes, in the strange, the alien handwriting were written two words, "Mabbel" and "Blacket"; but the handwriting, stiff, angular, large, resembled his cousin's sloping calligraphy as little as did the spelling of the two words that of her name. A thrill of fear, of terrifying suspicion flooded Bill Oldchester's shrewd, commonplace mind. Slowly he read the strange letter through. The missive ran, in French:

MADAME NOIR: I am leaving Enghien this evening in order to join my friend, Madame Olsen. I request you, therefore, to send on my luggage to the cloakroom at the Gare du Nord. I inclose a hundred-franc note to pay you what I owe. Please distribute the rest of the money among the servants. I beg to inform you that I have been exceedingly comfortable at the Pension Noir, and will recommend it to my friends.

Yours very cordially,
MABEL BLACKETT.

Turning on his heel, without even saying "*Bon soir*" to the astonished, and by now repentant Monsieur Noir, Oldchester rushed out on the veranda.

"Come into the house! Now, at once!" he said roughly. "Something extraordinary has happened!"

The Comte De Poupel jumped out of the carriage, and a moment later the two men stood together in the brightly lighted veranda, unseeing, uncaring of the fact that Monsieur Noir was staring at them with affrighted eyes.

"This letter purports to be from Mabel Blackett," said Oldchester hoarsely, "but of course it is nothing of the sort! She never wrote a line of it. It's entirely unlike her handwriting—and then look at the absurd signature! What does it mean, Poupel? Can you give me any clew to what it means?"

The Comte De Poupel looked up. Even Oldchester, frightened and angry as he now was, could not help noticing how the other man's face had changed in a few moments. From being of a usual healthy pallor, it had turned so white as to look almost green under the bright electric light.

"Yes, I think I know what it means," said Poupel in a whisper. "Do not let us make a scene here. I know where she is. If what I believe is true, every moment is of value."

He plucked the American by the sleeve, and hurried him out into the grateful darkness.

"Get into the carriage," he said imperiously. "I will see to everything."

Oldchester heard him direct the driver to the police station.

"We may need two or three gendarmes," he muttered. "It's worth the three minutes' delay!"

The carriage drew up before a shab-

by little house across which was written in huge black letters the word "*Gendarmerie*." The count rushed into the guardroom, hurriedly explained his errand to the superintendent, and came out, but a moment later, with three men.

"We must make room for them somehow," he said briefly, and room was made.

Oldchester noticed with surprise that each man was armed not only with a stave, but with a revolver. The French police show no kindness even to potential criminals.

They swept on, through the dimly lighted, shady avenues, till they came to the outskirts of the town. Paul De Poupel sat with clenched hands, staring in front of him, and the gendarmes murmured together in quick, excited tones.

At last, as they turned into a dark road, De Poupel suddenly began to talk at the very top of his voice:

"Speak, Mr. Oldchester, speak as loud as you can! Shout! Say anything that you like! They may as well hear that we are coming!"

But Oldchester could not do what the other man so urgently required of him; to save his life he could not have opened his mouth and shouted as the other was doing.

"We are going to pay an evening call—what you in America call an evening call! We are going to fetch our friend—our friend, Mrs. Blackett; she is so charming, so delightful! We are going to fetch her because she has been spending the evening with her friends, the Wachners. That old woman-devil—you remember her, surely? The woman who asked you concerning your plans? Is it she I fear—"

"*Je crois que c'est ici, monsieur?*"

The horse was suddenly brought up short opposite a small white gate. Oldchester saw, standing back in a large moonlit garden, a small square house. The windows were closely shuttered, but where the shutters met in one of the lower rooms glinted a straight line of light.

"We are in time," said the count, with a queer break in his voice. "If we were

not in time there would be no light. The house of the wicked ones would be in darkness." And then in French he added: "You had better all three stay in the garden, while Mr. Oldchester and I go up to the house. If we are gone more than five minutes then one of you follow us."

In varying accents came the composed answers: "*Oui, m'sieur.*"

There came a check. The little gate was locked. Each man helped another over very quietly, and then the three gendarmes dispersed with swift, noiseless steps, each seeking a point of vantage commanding the house. Oldchester and Paul De Poupel, talking in loud, confident tones, walked quickly up the path.

Suddenly a shaft of bright light pierced the moonlit darkness. The shutters of the dining room of the Châlet des Muguet had been unbarred, and the window flung open.

"*Qui va là?*"

The old military watchword, as the Frenchman remembered with a sense of its terrible irony, was flung out into the night in the harsh, determined voice of Madame Wachner. They saw her stout figure filling up most of the window outlined against the lighted room. She was leaning out, peering into the garden with angry, fearful eyes.

Both men stopped speaking simultaneously. Neither answered her.

"Who goes there?" she repeated. And then: "I fear, messieurs, that you have made a mistake. You have taken this villa for some one else's house." But there was alarm as well as anger in her voice.

"It is I, Paul De Poupel, Madame Wachner." The count spoke quite courteously, his agreeable voice thickened, made hoarse by the strain to which he had just subjected it. "I have brought Mr. Oldchester. We have come to fetch Madame Blackett, for in Paris we found news making her return home to America at once a matter of imperative necessity."

He waited a moment, then added, raising his voice as he spoke: "We know that she is spending the evening

with you." And he walked on quickly to where he supposed the front door to be.

"If they deny she is there," he whispered to his companion, "we will shout for the gendarmes and break in. But I doubt if they will dare to deny she is there unless—unless—"

The two men stood in front of the closed door for what seemed to them a very long time. It was exactly three minutes, and when at last it opened slowly, revealing the tall, lanky figure of "L'Ami Fritz," they both heard the soft, shuffling tread of the gendarmes closing in round the house.

"I pray you to come in," said Monsieur Wachner in English, and addressing Bill Oldchester. "I am pleased to see you—the more so that your friend, Madame Blackett, is indisposed. A moment ago, to our deep concern, she found herself quite faint—no doubt from the heat. I will conduct you, gentlemen, into the drawing-room; my wife and Madame Blackett will join us there in a minute."

Only then did he move back sufficiently to allow the two men to cross the threshold.

Paul De Poupel opened his lips, but no sound came from them. The sudden sense of relief from what had been agonized suspense gripped him by the throat. He brushed past Wachner, and made straight for the door behind which he felt sure he would find the woman whom some instinct already told him he had saved from a dreadful fate.

He turned the handle of the dining-room door, and then he stopped short, for he was amazed at the sight which met his eyes. Mabel Blackett was sitting at a round table still laden with the remains of a simple meal. Her face was hidden in her hands, and she was trembling—shaking as though she had the ague.

On the floor Madame Wachner was crawling about on her hands and knees, but as the dining-room door opened she looked up, and with some difficulty raised herself from her stooping position.

"Such a misfortune!" she exclaimed,

"Such a very great misfortune! The necklace of our friend 'as broken, and her beautiful pearls are rolling all over the floor! We 'ave been trying, Fritz and myself, to pick them up for her. Is not that so, Mab-bel? She is so distressed! It 'as made her feel very faint. But I tell her we shall find them all—it is only a matter of a little time. I asked her to take some cognac my husband keeps for such bad moments, but no, she would not. Is not that so, Mab-bel?"

She stared down gloomily at the bowed head of her guest.

Mrs. Blackett looked up. As if hypnotized by the other woman's voice, she rose to her feet—a wan, pitiful little smile came over her white face.

"Yes," she said dully, "the string broke. I was taken faint—I felt horribly queer—perhaps it was the heat."

Paul De Poupel took a sudden step forward into the room. He had just become aware of something which had made him also feel "queer." That something had no business in the dining room, for it belonged to the kitchen; in fact, it was a large wooden mallet of the kind used by French cooks to beat meat tender. Just now the club end of the mallet was sticking out of the drawer of the walnut buffet. The drawer had evidently been pulled out askew, and had stuck—as is the way with drawers forming part of ill-made furniture.

Oldchester, over the count's shoulder, was looking anxiously at Mabel. True, she did not seem well, but she was *all right*, and on quite friendly terms with the Wachners.

What had the Comte De Poupel meant by calling the commonplace, stout woman now speaking so kindly to and of Mabel, a devil? Above all, what had he meant by his hints of deadly danger, by his agonized fear of being too late?

Bill Oldchester began to wonder what they ought to do about the gendarmes. Whether it would be possible to get them out of the place without the Wachners knowing they had been there. He felt very uncomfortable, and it seemed to him that Mabel Blackett avoided looking at him.

Had not her last words to him been a plea for his noninterference in her affairs? At the time she had uttered them the words had hurt him, made him feel very angry. But, after all, she was a grown-up woman, she had a right to conduct her life as she liked; she had even a right—and this was a galling thought—to be very much annoyed that he had come back in this way, even following her to her friends' house.

"Well, Mabel," he said rather shortly, "I suppose we ought to be going now. We have a carriage waiting at the gate, so we shall be able to drive you home. But of course we must first pick up all your pearls—it won't take long."

But Mrs. Blackett made no answer. She did not even look round. She was still standing looking straight before her, as if she saw something the others could not see written on the distempered wall.

"L'Ami Fritz" entered the room quietly. He looked even odder than usual, for while in one hand he held Mrs. Blackett's pretty black tulle hat and her fancy bag, in the other was clutched the handle of a broom.

"I did not think you would want to go back into my wife's bedroom," he said deprecatingly; and Mrs. Blackett, at last turning her head round, actually smiled gratefully at him.

She was reminding herself that he had tried to save her. Only once—only when he had grinned at her so strangely, and deplored her refusal of the drugged coffee—had she felt really afraid of him.

Laying the hat and bag on the table, he began sweeping the floor with long, skillful movements.

"This is the best way to find the pearls," he muttered, and three of the four people present stood and looked on at what he was doing.

As for the one most concerned, Mabel Blackett had again begun to stare dully before her, as if what was going on did not interest her one whit.

At last "L'Ami Fritz" took a long spoon off the table; with its help he put what he had swept up—pearls, dust, and fluff—into the little fancy bag.

"There!" he said, with a sigh of relief. "I think they are all there."

But even as he spoke, he knew well enough that some of the pearls—perhaps five or six—had found their way up his wife's capacious sleeve.

And then quite suddenly, Madame Wachner uttered a hoarse exclamation of terror. One of the gendarmes had climbed up upon the window sill, and was now looking into the room. She waddled quickly across the room—only to meet another gendarme face to face in the hall.

Mabel's face gleamed; a sensation which had hitherto been quite unknown to her took possession of her, soul and body. She longed for revenge—revenge not so much for herself as for her murdered friend.

She clutched Paul De Poupel by the arm.

"They killed Anna Olsen," she whispered. "She is lying in the wood—where they meant to put me if you had not come just, only just in time!"

Paul De Poupel beckoned to the oldest police official present.

"You will remember the disappearance from Enghien of a Danish lady. I have reason to believe these people murdered her. Once I have placed Madame Blackett under medical care, I will return here. Meanwhile you of course know what to do."

"But, m'sieur—ought I not to detain this American lady?"

"Certainly not. I make myself responsible for her. She is in no state to bear an interrogation. Lock up these people in separate rooms. I will send you reinforcements, and to-morrow morning dig up the little wood behind the house."

"Are you coming, Mabel?" called out Oldchester impatiently.

"Yes, yes. We are coming!"

Paul De Poupel hurried her out through the hall into the grateful darkness. Behind them rose angry voices—the shrill and the gruff tones of "L'Ami Fritz" and his wife raised in indignant expostulation.

Once out in the dark, scented garden

with the two men, one on either side of her, Mabel Blackett walked slowly to the gate. Between them they got her over it, and into the victoria. Paul De Poupel pulled out the little back seat, but Oldchester, taking quick possession of it, motioned him to sit by Mabel.

"To Paris, Hôtel du Louvre," the count called out to the driver. "You can take as long as you like over the journey." Then he bent forward to Oldchester. "The air will do her good," he murmured.

By his side, huddled up in a corner of the carriage, Mabel Blackett lay back inertly; her eyes were wide open; she was staring hungrily at the sky, at the stars. She had never thought to see the sky and the stars again.

They were moving very slowly. The driver was accustomed to people who suddenly decided to drive all the way back into Paris from Enghien after an evening's successful, or for the matter of that unsuccessful, play.

He had been very much relieved to see his two gentlemen come back from the chalet, leaving the gendarmes behind. He had no wish to get mixed up in a fracas; no wish, that is, to have any embarrassments with the police.

They drove on through dimly lit, leafy thoroughfares till they came into the outskirts of the great city, and still Mrs. Blackett remained obstinately silent.

At last Oldchester began to feel vaguely alarmed. Why was Mabel so strange, so unlike herself? As she had stood waiting for her pearls to be gathered and restored to her, she had certainly behaved oddly, and yet—and yet the Wachners had been very kind. He hoped they were not angry with him for the presence of the police. Doubtless the men had remained behind to explain and apologize.

And then suddenly Bill Oldchester remembered the letter—the extraordinary letter which had purported to be written by Mabel Blackett. Who had written that letter, and for what reason?

Paul De Poupel leaned forward.

"Speak to her," he said in an urgent whisper. "Take her hand, and try to

rouse her. I feel very preoccupied about her condition."

Oldchester in the darkness felt himself flushing. With a diffident gesture, he took Mabel Blackett's hand in his, and then he uttered an exclamation of surprise and concern. Her hand was quite cold—cold and nerveless to the touch, as if all that constitutes life had gone out of it.

"My dear girl!" he exclaimed. "What is the matter? I hope those people didn't frighten you in any way? Do you suspect them of having wanted to steal your pearls?"

But Mabel remained silent, absolutely silent. She did not want to speak, she only wanted to live. It was so strange to feel oneself alive—alive and whole at a time when one had thought to be dead, having been done to death after an awful, disfiguring struggle, for Mabel had determined to struggle to the end with her murderers.

"My God!" muttered Paul De Poupel. "Do you not understand? They meant to kill her!"

"To kill her?" repeated Oldchester incredulously.

Then there came over him a rush and glow of angry excitement. Good God! If that was the case, they ought to have driven back at once to the local police station.

"Mabel!" he exclaimed. "Rouse yourself, and tell us what happened! If what the count says is true, something must be done at once."

Mabel moved slightly; Paul De Poupel could feel her shuddering.

"Oh, Bill, let me try to forget," she moaned. And then, lifting her voice: "They killed Anna Olsen—poor Anna Olsen!" Her voice broke, and she began to sob convulsively. "I would not think of her," she sobbed. "I forced myself not to think of her—but now I shall never, never think of any one else any more."

Paul De Poupel put his arm round

her shoulder, and drew her tenderly to him.

"Everything has been done that could be done to-night," he said authoritatively. "And I will see, never fear, that these infamous people are not allowed to escape. Poor Madame Olsen shall be avenged."

A passion of pity, of protective tenderness, filled his heart, and suddenly lifted him into another region than that in which he had become content to dwell.

"But surely the police ought to take Mrs. Blackett's statement to-night," objected Oldchester.

"Mrs. Blackett will never be called upon to make any statement to the police," the count said quietly. "There will be ample evidence, quite apart from anything she could tell them; and I would not subject her to the ordeal of appearing as witness in such a case." He felt that Mrs. Blackett was listening gratefully. "I have an announcement to make to you, Mr. Oldchester, which will, I feel sure, bring me your congratulation. Mrs. Blackett is about to do me the honor of becoming my wife." He waited a moment, and then added very gravely: "I am giving her an undertaking, a solemn promise by all I hold dear, to give up play."

Oldchester felt a shock of surprise. The count's words made him forget for a moment—as perhaps Paul De Poupel had meant them to do—the events of this remarkable evening. How mistaken, how blind he had been! The worthy American lawyer's feelings toward the count had undergone a great change. But for Paul De Poupel where would Mabel be now?

He leaned forward, and grasped the other man's left hand.

"I do congratulate you," he said heartily. "You deserve your good luck."

And then to Mabel he added quietly: "Under God you owe him your life."

THE HOUR BETWEEN

MARGARETTA TUTTLE

SURELY she does not want release this way," said Carleton Thorne. "This would leave her nothing; not even a name. She has not thought it over."

He had joined his wife and her father in Mrs. Cressler Jeffrey's drawing-room while they waited for Mrs. Carson. All of the wedding guests save those in the house party had gone.

Doctor Thorne had made the arch-deacon comfortable after his encounter with Colin Carson, and promised to have other clothes sent to the house by night. And then Mrs. Carson's man had brought them a note saying that she had left hurriedly to catch the express to Boston at Bradport, and that the motor was at their disposal for their return trip to town.

The note to Judge Wallace concluded:

I have asked you to permit this woman, who says she is Colin Carson's wife, to prove that she is, and you have said that you will not act on my hasty impulse. I am going away by myself to think it over with the utmost care, away from my friends, or the evidences of the luxury I will have to give up. I will live as I should have to live if I were not the dispenser of Colin Carson's money. I shall go to some inexpensive hotel, and in a day or two I will send you my address if you will see that I am not intruded on.

At the end of the week I shall expect you to believe that my impulse is neither hasty nor inconsiderate.

"If it were I," said Amy Thorne, "I should prefer release from Colin Carson at any price."

"You have not lived as she has, Amy," said the doctor. "It is not simply a life of ease she gives up, but one of power and influence that she has created by the addition of her own intelligence and ability to these millions she has had at her disposal. She would at one stroke become a declassed woman. She would drop from inconceivable luxury to a penury more unendurable because of the things that by this time are food and drink to her. She will encounter public scandal, and if she escapes insult she will do well."

"And what would she gain?" said Judge Wallace. "With Carson back in his sanitarium, she is free to do as she chooses. She has opportunities equalled by only three or four women in the world."

"Yes," Amy Thorne's voice was impatient. "The granaries are full to bursting. I admit it. But it is possible that she has graver needs than these. To you it seems she has but to choose. Suppose she chooses the one thing this indissoluble marriage to a maniac denies her."

The two men looked at each other. Then Carleton Thorne spoke with hesitation.

"It would be a foolish thing to give up all of this—for—for—some man. Amy, what makes you suppose there is such a man?"

"Nadine's wish to give it up."

"It is incredible," said Carleton Thorne.

Yet his protest was merely a conces-

sion to a thing he did not wish to believe because he was Wrexford Thorne's brother. Even as he made it, he realized that this was a possibility he had long faced.

The first time he had seen these two together he had seen also their perfect adaptation to each other. He knew of no woman whose mind and whose culture so mated his brother's. The tragedy of their growth into love of each other across the bar of the woman's bondage to a marriage that was no marriage had seemed unlikely because of his brother's character and poise. If it came to pass, the doctor knew it would take no compromised expression; that it would mean marriage or renunciation.

His brother was of all men in the world the one man to whom the taking of a wife under the circumstances surrounding Mrs. Carson would mean a sacrifice of career. He was the rector of the most conspicuous parish in the greatest city of America. He was watched and gossiped about; advised and followed. Nothing but a gift for discretion had saved him from a thousand difficulties.

Doctor Thorne turned to his father-in-law.

"Will you tell me," he said, "what there is in Mrs. Carson's hope of escape from her marriage?"

"I will see if I can make it clear to you," said the judge.

"About two years before Carson married, and four years before he was committed to a sanitarium, he became entangled with a woman quite beyond her class in intelligence. He found it extremely difficult to get away from her after he had tired of her. She even went so far as to engage a lawyer and claim a wedding ceremony of some sort. Harding was at that time Carson's lawyer, and he finally settled with the woman for a large sum. The amount is on the estate books.

"The ceremony was so obviously a fake as not to engage either lawyer's attention. It was merely an ordinary case of blackmail timed well—for Carson was about to marry and unwilling to risk notoriety.

"You recall Harding was trustee of the estate a few years longer, and for one year after Carson was committed to his sanitarium. Then Mrs. Carson, convinced that Harding was using both his position and the money that passed through his hands for his own enrichment, had him removed. After an interval I took Harding's place.

"In my investigations of my predecessor's business methods, I gained the impression that it was he who had brought this woman to Carson's attention, he who had persuaded Carson to accede to her demands for money, and probably shared in her gains. It was also Harding who assisted Mrs. Carson in having her husband declared insane. I think he had no notion of Mrs. Carson's ability. During the two years she had lived with Carson, she was in constant terror of him, and there was nothing then to indicate the quality of her intelligence. I believe Harding supposed that he had only to be rid of Carson and his own management of this colossal estate would not be questioned.

"Very suddenly, in the midst of Harding's most ambitious planning, Mrs. Carson, who had been steadily watching him, put an end to all his plans. You could not expect him to forgive it. And now this woman reappears, and is seen talking with Harding. A few days after, Carson escapes from his sanitarium under circumstances that show help from the outside, and both Carson and the woman are seen together. You can call this accidental, yet to me it points quite unmistakably to Harding. A paranoiac and a woman like this, with a long scar on her face, are too conspicuous to disappear without competent help.

"I shall set a watch on Harding the moment I reach town. As for the woman's claim, I would have said there is nothing in it but for Mrs. Carson's singular request of an hour ago that I let her prove it true. This requires me to look into the matter from another standpoint."

"What will you do?" said Carleton Thorne.

"I will wait for Harding to move. He

will do one of two things: If he himself believes this girl is married to Carson, he will immediately bring suit—probably quietly—and the thing will be tried before a referee. If he does not believe she is married, he will come to my office and threaten to bring suit, in which case it will probably turn out to be an ordinary case of blackmail."

"And Nadine," said Amy Thorne, "waiting in Boston."

"I shall telephone her this as soon as she sends her address."

Amy Thorne leaned toward her husband.

"Carl," she said, "where is Wrexford? He is not in town."

The doctor stared at his wife.

"Why Rex is—" He considered. "Rex is in Boston. He went there several days ago to confer with the bishop."

"Rex is in Boston," said Amy Thorne.

The three looked at each other.

Nadine Carson turned the chair, where she sat at the end of the parlor car, toward the window, and stared blindly out at the flying fields. The very pillars of her life were crumbling about her; its foundations shaken by this news, now two hours old, that somewhere in the world there was a woman who asserted that she was Colin Carson's wife and that Nadine was not.

We are so finely formed for the adapting of ourselves to what cannot be altered that we live day after day with those things that deny us, and threaten us, and stunt us, adapting our daily living to them with no real comprehension of the powers within us that sleep beneath our endurance. Then the hour comes when character forces of which we have not dreamed rise within us, and bend and break our little conventions and our careful habits, and the way before us is swept bare of its landmarks. We do things we had not thought possible, we move through strange ways, astonished at ourselves, knowing ourselves ineradicably changed, even though our lives find the same spaces of time in the same world, among the same people.

Strange thoughts Nadine had not dreamed could come to her rang in her brain; whispers of the untamable spirit swayed her with promise of the glory of the earth; love that lives not on the body and its sacrifice, but on the spirit and its growth, spoke to her. How had she, who had gathered into her warped life a hundred little loves, born of the hour's weariness or the moment's mood, found this love deep with faith in its own immortality, quiet with that patience that knows eternity lies beyond?

It had come to her slowly at first with that friendship that is love's servant; in the hand stretched out to turn her from a path ending in waste places; in the look of grave, gray eyes summoning her to usefulness; in service, and understanding, and work together among those he brought into her life who needed help.

It was Wrexford Thorne who had shown her that her gift of that intelligence swift to perceive a situation was the gift that should lie behind all help of others. The words were few between them, save as they met to speak of others' needs. Sometimes a book or a picture filled an odd moment. There was none of those occasions where love thrives on events; no propinquity, no casual meetings, no little dinners, no summer afternoons idled together; none of the things Nadine had supposed helped to build love. It had been this that had kept her from calling this friendship love during the period of its growth; even when she realized that only in this man's presence there came to her that strange rest that is our rarest promise of the peace that passeth understanding she had not known. She had only said to herself how a woman could love such a man!

But none may look on the great love not knowing it, and the hour of Nadine's vision came as inevitably as the love itself. She had faced it believing that there was no hope for her; and now freedom was perhaps at hand. She looked at it, wondering if it would mean anything to the man she loved. To be loved by one we love is so incredible that it is no wonder we can scarcely be-

lieve it. Fear touched her heart, and whitened her face, and looked out of her eyes.

In the station at Boston, Nadine had a few minutes of indecision. It had been a long time since she had carried her own bag or traveled without competent attendants. Not since her marriage had she gone to a hotel that had not elaborately arranged to receive her with the best it had to offer. It had been many years since she had entered a street car. Yet the bag she had brought from the wedding was not hard to carry, and the street car carried her within two squares of the hotel she chose on Copley Square, away from chance tourists who might recognize her.

She walked the two squares slowly, tasting that part of her possible freedom that meant the giving up of Colin Carson's money. At a triangle made by intersecting streets and filled by a massive, square-towered church she turned to her hotel, passing that part of the triangle that was at the back of the church and on which faced its offices and its lecture rooms. The street door bore a sign:

Church open. Come in. Rest and pray.

Because of the man she loved all churches had significance for Nadine, and she looked at this open door thoughtfully, wondering if in this busy city there were those who paused to enter a church to pray. What if one could rest and pray? Would it mean that steadyng of moral purpose, that finding of spiritual resolution it promised?

She looked back at the church as she crossed the street to her hotel, and, after she had registered, she asked what church it was.

"Trinity Church," answered the clerk, looking at the "Mrs. Colin Carson, New York," inscribed on his book.

"It is the church Phillips Brooks built and preached in. What kind of a room will you have, Mrs. Carson?"

Nadine looked at him a moment, recognizing his doubt of a woman who came alone carrying her own bag and registering with a name familiar to the country for its wealth.

"An outside room, with bath, and rea-

sonable in price," said Nadine. "I will look at it first."

As the bell boy put down her bag and drew up the shades, Nadine crossed to the window of her room, and looked down on the square church towers around which hundreds of pigeons were wheeling. The man for whom this church had been built was no religious weakling, but one who fought and—she hesitated and added—prayed.

Left alone in the bare hotel room, Nadine had her first realization of what a new life beyond the influence of the things she had built on the wealth she had at her disposal would mean. Restlessness overtook her, and loneliness, and doubt.

She had not removed her hat. She left her room, and presently she stood before the church door, with its sign of invitation. It yielded to her touch, and she found herself in a hallway out of which opened many smaller rooms at the back of the church. Ahead of her an open door gave a vista of the church at the side of the chancel.

There was no other sound than the low murmur of a man's voice in one of the rooms she passed, and the light even in the hall came remotely from dim, stained windows. The church itself, as she entered, was gloomy and deserted.

She stood a moment looking about her. Then she moved forward beyond the chancel, and sank down in one of the cushioned pews. Rest was far from her, and prayer denied her. For in the dim silence realization again overtook her, and with it fear.

This freedom she craved. What was it if it meant only silence and solitude? Unless it brought her nearer to the love that had begun to form her life, it was, indeed, a valueless thing. And suddenly she saw how valueless were all things in her life that brought her no nearer to this "one thing."

The fear that had been dogging her thoughts expressed itself. Suppose she went forth from those years of unhappiness toward the man she loved! She would come to him through paths of scandal pointed at by every newspaper, her name on every tongue. And this to

a rector dependent on the women of his congregation for recognition, a social servant to whom convention was a necessity of his influence, would be disaster itself. She had thought it tragic enough that she could not come to him a girl, but that she must come a woman marked by the odium of a bigamous marriage was unthinkable.

She arose and moved to and fro in the dim aisle of the deserted church.

Out in the hall the two men who had been talking in a little study off the vestry finished their plans and rose to go.

At the street door the taller man paused.

"I will go back a little into the church, bishop, and think about what you have said."

He moved slowly down the hallway, grave, gray eyes on the floor, uncovered head bent. He entered the church, and then paused. A woman walked to and fro, as though pursued by bitter thoughts, her slender strength beating against some inner obstacle to which she would not yield.

He considered how he might withdraw without disturbing her, and then, as he waited, something in the grace of her movement clutched suddenly at the man's heart, and he leaned forward eagerly.

Even as he did so, Nadine arrested her restless pacing before the darkened altar, staring at it with uplifted white face.

"Was it not God's mercy seat in other days?" he heard her whisper. "Ah, God, if you still live, how do we poor things of earth find you, save through these things of the spirit—save through love. Give me love—give me this man's love, this man who is your priest—that I, too, may find you and believe that you are God."

Reluctantly and unbelievingly she cast her first prayer on the darkened altar, measuring Godhead with her own insufficiency. She waited a moment, and then turned away. What could rest or prayer mean to her? And as she turned from the dim spaces of the church, as if in answer to her cry, came Wrexford Thorne, came with his quiet

eyes, and his close-shut mouth, and that look in his face that was her gift to him.

On the hands held out to her she put her own, and they looked at each other in silence. Between them lay no need of words. About them lingered soft, sacred things of other worlds—winged whispers of the spirit, promising the eternal years to that which cannot die.

He stopped to look at her a moment as they reached the street door. The blue eyes were dark-circled with fatigue, the color had fled from her face, yet over it was a look of springtime.

"There is an elfin look about you, somehow. Perhaps you have come up from Elfheim. Are you by any chance the Dusk Elf gathering sunset colors to take back with you?"

"No;" and she looked out across the strange sky line of buildings. "No, I am Delling, the Elf of the Dawn—not of the Dusk. But even a Dawn Elf cannot know how you happen to be here."

He hesitated.

"It is a secret," he said.

"I will keep it inviolate."

"Well, then—they are thinking of making me—a bishop."

She stared at him, and then slowly a little fringe of color rose into her cheeks. A bishop had no congregation that a wife must placate. A bishop's wife need not be gifted in parish work—she could be as other wives; helping her husband's work as she helped him; not hindering it as she failed to please.

She knew of one bishop whose wife had come to him rich in social power, and so enriched his opportunities for good. And there had been another, who had married with only a dower of measureless love, and his life was its expression.

"I congratulate you," she said softly.

"And you?" he asked. "Does some coaching party lurk 'round the corner waiting for you to come? How does it happen that you should be in the church where I had to be?"

"Nobody waits for me, and I am alone. I am registered at the hotel

across the street because it is quiet and inexpensive."

He came a step nearer to her.

"What are you telling me?" he asked.

"I am telling you that I have stepped out of all this wealth, that I have no place to go, that I am as any girl who wanders about hunting for some way of making a living."

He put his hand on her arm and drew her back into the corridor to a bench beside the door.

"What are you doing?" he said deliberately.

"If it could be proven," she said, and never had her low voice held more sweetness, "that I was not Colin Carson's wife; if it could be proven that I have never been his wife——"

Some deep, inward flame touched his face. His hand tightened on her arm.

Presently she spoke in low tones of reaction of the woman whose claim preceded hers needing to be proven; of the week of denial she planned for herself here where she would not be known.

As she spoke he released her arm, and his face grew cold, measuring her words.

She looked at him in a moment's silence, and then voiced her fear.

"If this thing can be proven," she said, "there will be scarcely a place where I can hide from the scandal of it."

"What is this scandal that you fear? Nothing that can really hurt you. You have been injured. You have been tricked and cheated in marriage. This is no fault of yours, but of those who did it. It does not touch you as a woman. If you go free, there are things I will wish to say to you that I cannot say now."

"And if I do not?"

He made her no answer.

"Listen," she said. "I am to-night just a girl you know, and have come on suddenly in a lonely city where you had nothing to do. Think how long it has been since I with my heavy millions, and you with your church, have played a real game for real pleasure.

I am poor to-night, and you are but a college student, your plans not yet complete, your career not yet arranged. I will go back to my hotel, and presently you will come for me, and we will dine, not as I have dined all these stupid years, but in some quiet, little, inexpensive place befitting the purse of a student. And then shall we not go to some play and sit in the balcony or hear some music? We have never dined alone together in our lives. We have never gone to the theater together. We have done none of the things that other young men and women do to brighten their companionship."

Her voice faltered, and then went bravely on:

"Perhaps when this day is gone we may never be able to do these things again. Will you?"

"Yes. I will come for you in an hour, and in the meantime I will have found what music there is to be heard, and if there is a play so late in the season. And perhaps to-morrow, like any girl tourist, you will go with me to Harvard. We can even walk through the Common while we talk over the history that began there; and there is Bunker Hill—did you know that it is near Boston?"

High up in her room at the hotel Nadine stood for a moment looking across at the Trinity towers. She bathed and dressed slowly, brushing the dust from her blue crépe frock with unaccustomed fingers, and looking at it a bit doubtfully. She would have liked to look her best. She studied her whitened face a moment, and her fingers reached out for the rouge that would brighten it and give it youth; then she shook her head.

She coiled her bronze hair slowly. For six years the deftest of maids had dressed her. She smiled softly at her bungling; it was time she found the use of her own fingers again. She lingered over all the details of her toilet in the pleasure of dressing for him. She slipped the perfumed crépe, with its silken embroideries, over her head, and saw her eyes grow bluer as she fastened

the blue about her uncollared throat. Then came the knock that terminated her happy hour, and on the tray the boy held out lay Wrexford Thorne's card.

Before she went downstairs, Nadine stopped at the window again to look out at the gray towers and wait for a calmer heartbeat; and, as she waited, she knew that all the pain of her life was well worth living through if it brought her to this moment.

As he came toward her down the length of the hotel drawing-room, with that ease of movement that in a less masculine man would have been grace, the color flooded her face, and she put her hand in his with a shyness that bore its own message to the man.

"It is the Dawn Elf." He smiled at her. "You look young as the dawn, and as rosy. I think I shall take you off where nobody but I can see all this blushing and unblushing. I shall buy you a veil."

"You will have to if you wish me to wear one, for I've only what I have on with me."

"Then we shall go shopping to-morrow."

"To-night," she nodded. "I must have a toothbrush."

He opened the door for her, and they passed into the darkened street.

"I think I have never bought a toothbrush for a lady," he said; "but I like the idea. It shall be done!"

"Where are you taking me, Wrexford Thorne?"

"To dinner with me. To a little Japanese place hung with wistaria. There will be no people there this late, and you will have queer things to eat. You can also look at me quite unblushingly, if you choose."

"Are you sure I can—if I choose?"

He looked down on her. Back of the clear whiteness of his face a glow burned somewhere.

"No—no—who am I to be sure of so wonderful a thing?"

She slackened her pace, catching her breath.

"Oh, wait, I have never dreamed

such happiness was in the world. Let me linger over it."

He passed over the underlying tragedy that made her linger over each separate moment.

"You cannot guess," he said, "what I have been saying to myself all this hour I have been away from you. I said it to the Japanese man. I said it to the man of whom I bought tickets—tickets at the only theater open so late in the year—a stock company where they will play a real wonder of plays, 'Secret Service.'"

"What have you been saying?" she said, catching at the cloak of this gay rillery and throwing it about her.

"Guess!" he commanded, as they passed up the steps of a brownstone house, whose windows glowed with lavender light and whose walls were trellised with wistaria.

"How can I guess?" said Nadine.

They sat at a little table in a corner bower of lavender paper flowers, looking at each other over the lavender shades, and with no more thought of what they ate than if it had never been through Japanese fingers.

"I said—" He laughed softly. "I said: 'Nadine, Nadine, Nadine.' You look as if you did not believe me. Yet does it not sound as if I had said it very often? The Jap man stared at me, and the ticket man smiled at me, but all down the street I kept on saying it. It can be said so many different ways! Ah, there you go, one deep, beautiful, glorious blush of wild rose all over your face. Even your eyes blush, only they blush bluer and bluer. It is well you are in the corner with my shoulders blocking all vision of you. Do you know that your eyes are incredibly blue?"

"No," she laughed.

"Yes. And the lashes are all tangled up now because you are ashamed to look up at me with your face covered with that outrageous blush."

"I am not!" she protested.

"Then look at me, Nadine." He laughed at her with a boy's laugh. "Try, try, Nadine. Look first at this little black bow on my collar that is not cler-

ical. Yes, that untangles them a little. How long and dark they are for such blue eyes! Now up to the chin—so. I thought I should have to unknot the lashes, but they come apart easily, after all. Now take a long, long breath, and look me straight in the eyes."

They looked at each other in silence, and over the woman stole, second by second, the swift tide born of soul and bred by spirit that is the body's tribute to love.

New to her for all her wanderings, strange with a depth no mere pleasure could sound, vital with creative impulse, passion trembled in her blood, caught her breath, swept from her eyes to his, with its message of perfect mating.

When the soft-footed Japanese had brought finger bowls they rose.

"The records of Salem days were mostly destroyed," he said, as they moved down the steps. "I suppose nobody will ever know how many women were burned as witches. Be glad, Nadine, that you did not live here in those days. The years are not so many since you would have come to such an end."

"Oh, serene highness," she said, "the world still persecutes women for witchery."

"It has to save its self-respect. We take a cab to the theater. There will be shots fired, and breathless moments, and fine climaxes; and, when it is over, we shall walk back to your hotel through the gardens. And to-morrow you will never guess how I am coming for you! In no limousine; but with a runabout with a real horse. Have you ever driven a real horse with a real man in your life, Nadine?"

"No, *excellenza*, I have not."

"You shall drive with me to-morrow. Out to Harvard to see the glass flowers."

"Oh, oh! What a thing to go to Harvard for! I do not believe there are any."

"You shall see. You think you know Boston because you have run up in a private car to some ball or débutante tea. You shall see the depths of your ignorance of the cradle of your country's freedom. You shall go with me to

the North Tower, and to George Washington's church, and I will ask you questions that will betray your lack of education."

And suddenly Wrexford Thorne thought of her library, with its hundreds of used books, of her unparaded breadth of culture, of what she knew of music and color and events.

"All this in a runabout in one day?" said Nadine.

He smiled at her.

"A whole lifetime can go into one day, Nadine."

Judge Wallace took off the receiver to answer Mrs. Carson's long-distance call. She received his information that there had been no news of Mr. Carson, in spite of the most arduous detective work, with no comment.

"And the woman?" she asked.

"Nothing of her. But Harding returned to town to-day. I think you had better come back, Mrs. Carson. If the woman has a case, you will hear of it soon. If it is blackmail, Harding will begin it at once."

"I will return to-day. Will you come to my house at four?"

"I had better meet your train. It is not safe for you to go about alone with Mr. Carson unaccounted for."

"Hayes will meet me with the limousine. I will see you at four. Good-by."

The judge hung up the receiver, and then called his daughter on the telephone.

"Amy," he said, "have you heard if Wrexford Thorne is home?"

"He returned from Boston three days ago, father. Neither Carleton nor I have seen him, though he telephoned Carl to ask about Mr. Carson."

"Mrs. Carson will be home this afternoon. Perhaps you will want to see her."

The judge's secretary opened his office door, and paused as he heard the telephoning. The judge hung up the receiver.

"What is it?" he asked.

The secretary closed the door.

"Mr. Harding, sir, is in the other room. Will you receive him?"

The two men looked at each other with swift glances of significance.

"It is all over, then, but the finish," said the judge. "Ask Mr. Harding to wait. Then bring me the memoranda from the bank. Give me about fifteen minutes, and then show him in. I will not answer the telephone or be disturbed while he is here."

As Harding entered the office, the judge looked up from a packet of papers he was examining.

"Will you sit down, Mr. Harding?" he said absently. "Just a moment, please."

He finished the papers thoughtfully, put a rubber band around them, and, holding them in his hand, looked across his desk at Harding in absolute silence.

Harding waited a moment for the judge to speak, and, finding it useless, he said:

"I have come to talk over with you my client's claim of marriage with Mr. Carson. It has taken me some little time to prepare my case, and I have had to go on to Chicago to hunt up the records and secure the witnesses; but I am about ready now, and we propose to bring the matter to a speedy conclusion."

He paused to give the judge a chance to answer, but the pause remained unfilled. The judge looked out of the window, apparently waiting for Harding to continue.

Harding considered him a moment.

"You know," he said, "that we can prove our claim."

"There is, of course, the little formality of the proof," suggested the judge indifferently.

"We can do it."

"You had one chance to do it. It did not come to much."

"It came to sixty thousand dollars, and that sounded better to my client at that time than Carson's threats if she should succeed in proving her marriage to him. He was not in an asylum then, and he declared that if she proved marriage he would divorce her, and she would not have a penny of his money;

whereas the other way she would be made moderately independent.

"But now he is insane. He cannot divorce, and the thing looks better to my client. We propose to establish her claims and take over the management of the estate."

"Very well," said the judge.

Harding looked at him in astonishment.

"Is that all you have to say?" he asked.

"Very nearly. I will add, if you like, that Mrs. Carson, a little tired of being the wife of a paranoiac, will be very glad to have you prove your claims and release her from a position which, as you say, is not possible of alleviation by divorce." *

The judge again looked out of the window. The other man stared at him. His mask of a face hid whatever astonishment he felt, but he moistened his lips before he spoke again.

"She wishes to give up a twenty-million-dollar estate to be released from Colin Carson?"

"Apparently."

Harding sat back in his chair trying to comprehend so stupendous a sentiment in a woman he had cause to know was well-balanced and intelligent. Failing utterly, he concluded it to be a clever trick of her lawyer.

He rose.

"This is all you have to say about the matter?" he asked.

"I had nothing to say of any sort. I believe it was you who wished to talk."

"You know, of course, that even if we should not win, we can make you very considerable trouble. This woman knows a good deal about Carson—she was with him several years. There will be a few thousand people who will never believe Mrs. Carson has a right either to her name or her money. She will be talked of all over the country. Do you mean to say that this is of no account to her?"

"If it is inevitable, why should she worry about it?"

Harding hesitated.

"There might be some compromise effected," he said at length.

The judge made no answer.

"For a sufficient sum—nothing, of course, like the miserable sixty thousand with which she was first bought off—my client might consider keeping quiet. She does not want position—she wants support."

"Not even clever at your blackmailing, Harding," said Judge Wallace. "I think I answered you when I said Mrs. Carson would be glad to assist you in proving your client's claim."

Harding looked down at the floor a moment.

"I do not believe you," he said finally. "I know Mrs. Carson pretty well. It has not been so long since I was trustee of the estate, and saw her often. There are all kinds of ugly stories about her that I can stir up. There isn't a reporter in New York that could keep away from some of the things I can tell. I think I'll see her first about a few of these stories. If she wants to forfeit twenty millions to get rid of Carson as husband, there's some man she'll not be anxious to have hear all I can tell. And she'll be anxious to the tune of a few hundred thousand, I think. Good day, Mr. Wallace."

"Just a moment," said the judge.

"Ah!" said Harding.

But the judge's voice was still indifferent, though his words came clearly and with a certain crispness.

"It has probably not occurred to you that, following your removal from the management of the Carson estate, I was made counsel for the Fulton Bank, where the Carson funds have been on deposit for twenty years."

"It does not concern me," said Harding.

"A little. I am also a director of the bank and a member of its executive committee. I took over the management of the Carson funds after a pretty thorough examination into what you had done—an examination that was facilitated by these offices I hold."

The judge took the rubber band off his papers and unfolded one.

"During the last year of your incumbency, there is a little matter of eighty thousand dollars used by you. It was

kept out of the bank three months, and then restored with five per cent, for the use of the money. Now, Mr. Harding, I have no real wish to quibble over this sum, nor yet over the fifty-six thousand dollars borrowed a little later with no security, and handled much the same way. Both sums were returned to the estate, and the interest was fair.

"Until I began to surmise that you were behind this woman who was threatening to dispossess Mrs. Carson, I did not concern myself very much about the money. But when I found you were the one we would have to fight, I investigated it. I have a little record here of eighty thousand dollars' worth of steel stock bought on margin when it touched bottom and sold high. I have also a record of a fifty-six-thousand-dollar purchase of yours of Wabash Preferred, bought at nineteen and held for two months during its swift, upward run; finally sold at forty-three.

"You are, of course, familiar with the fact that the penalty for this kind of thing is between six and fourteen years in the penitentiary. I have no wish to prosecute you unless you become troublesome to Mrs. Carson. If you do, it will have to be done from behind a few bars, I think.

"Now, as to this woman, I conclude that she is with Carson, and that you know where they are. I am anxious to return Carson to his sanitarium. I shall expect you to produce him within the next fortnight. If you do, though I think the sixty thousand dollars the girl received from the Carson estate a pretty big haul, nevertheless, if she proves to me that she is destitute, I will ask Mrs. Carson if she can see her way to a small annuity for her—to be withdrawn if she annoys any of us. And that is all, Harding."

The judge folded his paper and put it within the rubber band. Harding stood with his eyes on the floor. His face whitened slowly. He had planned long and executed carefully a hazardous enterprise with the uncertain assistance of a paranoiac and an emotional woman. He had taken pains for what he believed would be a large result. He had

felt there was no limit to the money he might collect if he used even a moderate discretion. He faced his failure with bitter anger.

"I know nothing at all about the whereabouts of Colin Carson. If I did, I should be the first one to remand him to an asylum."

"And your client? She was last seen with Carson at Cressler, the Jeffrey country place on Long Island."

"Well, they are not together now. You can set your detectives to work if you do not believe it."

The judge rose.

"Good afternoon, Harding. As I said, I shall expect information from you about Carson's whereabouts during the next fortnight. You can have no object in keeping him at large if you decide not to press your blackmail."

"I know nothing about him," said Harding, and the door closed behind him.

The judge looked at his watch and rang for his secretary.

Rawlins opened Mrs. Carson's door for the judge.

"In the library, sir," he said, with that deference that accorded a privilege. "Mrs. Carson has just arrived. She will be downstairs in a few minutes. The Reverend Mr. Thorne is in the library, sir."

Wrexford Thorne stood with his back to the library door, looking at the painting of the girl and the man in their shell of a boat tossed by a sea haunted with dim forms; looking at the fear in the man's face and the blind ecstasy in the girl's.

He turned as the judge entered the room, as if he had expected another, and the judge looked at him with concern. His face had the tension of sleeplessness, the eyes gray-rimmed, the close-shut lips dull, the skin colorless.

They had no time even to greet each other. Rawlins opened the door again, and Mrs. Carson entered. The judge came forward with outstretched hand. Wrexford Thorne stood where he was, the tension in his eyes deepening to strain.

Some subtle force had been at work within Nadine with proof of what love unbound and victorious can do. Every softened curve of her face was underlined, every mark of vivid personality was accented.

"I am glad you are both here," she said. "I want you, judge, to explain to Mr. Thorne my chance of release."

The two men's eyes met. Instinctively the judge sought to palliate his news.

"Mrs. Carson, perhaps you might arrange to live in Florida the necessary length of time and divorce your husband."

She turned to him, instantly aware of some halting shadow across her dream.

"Divorce!" she said, and looked at Wrexford Thorne.

Of all the men she might have loved, he was the one man whose calling forbade him to marry a divorced woman. To do it he must give up his life's work. Not even for life spent with him would Nadine have endured such a sacrifice.

The judge plunged his news into the silence that followed Nadine's cry.

"Your marriage stands, Mrs. Carson. There is nothing in this girl's claim save an elaborate attempt at blackmail."

Nadine stared at him unbelievingly. Her face slowly whitened. Its high courage dimmed.

"It cannot be true," she whispered, at length. "Oh, surely it cannot be true!"

"It is true. Harding is behind it, as I thought. He came to me to-day to try to get money. There is no chance of the girl proving her claim."

The room fell silent again. Crimson and gold and cream the lines of books, overshadowed by deep-toned paintings, all friends of the woman who stood among them, surrounded her with promise that the life to which she must return held promise and opportunity; but she saw but one thing in the world.

"You are sure—absolutely sure?" she said.

"I am sure," said the judge.

Her eyes passed over him and rested on Wrexford Thorne, watching her; and Judge Wallace, catching the look,

left the room quietly, closing the door behind him.

The two behind the closed door made no movement toward each other. But as they looked across the gulf of this marriage that was no marriage, the white misery of the woman's face slowly deepened into something infinitely finer and stronger, that wonder of the world, love that knows its power and will not use it for right's sake. It bound the man to her as no love fulfilled could have done.

Presently she spoke to him; a brief sentence:

"If you go out of my life, I shall not be able to endure it."

"I shall not go out of your life even if I do not see you. We are still in the world, and this—this love is no thing of touch and speech."

It was his first word of love, and for a moment her very heart seemed to pause to listen.

"I have not your strength," she said.

"You have strength," he answered. "You are no weakling. You are tempered as steel is by flame and stress. This thing comes to you to prove that greatest strength of all, the strength that stands on sacrifice. Not even these days to come that are already threatening you with their barrenness shall take away your courage. We have not come into each other's life for little fears or little gratifications, but for something that touches the very skirts of eternity.

"If you are denied marriage, by the same denial you are given the power of great wealth to lighten other pain. If you—are denied—motherhood, the world is full of tired children who need you and your great gift of understand-

ing that comes of the heights and depths you have sounded."

"These things I have tried to do—because of you."

He made her no answer for some minutes. Then he said:

"Will you look back at your life a moment? There has been no time when you have been permitted to be weak. By every outside force you have been shaped to stand alone—able to achieve—as few women are able. And so I do not fear for your ability to serve without such help as I could give. Oh, Nadine, it is only standing alone that we can make the great things our own. Honor—not for some other's sake, but for its own high purpose; service, not because it has been asked for, but for what it can do of good; love—love that is God's gift of Himself; no tawdry thing of mere pleasure—love, the sacrifice, the sacrament."

He crossed the room to her, taking her hands with close clasp.

"God keep you, Nadine."

She heard the door close him out of the hours to come; a brief silence, and then the outer door swung into its lock.

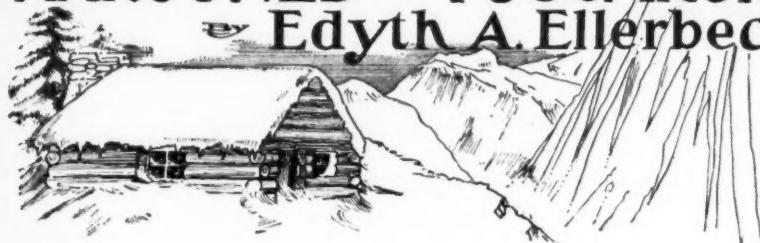
And alone, as all of us must go to our Gethsemanes, no matter how near the friends who sleep within the garden of our trail, Nadine faced her sacrifice. Not this cup, we say; and the power is ours to refuse it, refusing forever, if we do, Him who offers it.

Out of her hour Nadine came slowly, shaken and worn with the pangs of soul birth; came to a new heaven and a new earth, a woman incomparably finer and sweeter, with new vision of her place in the lightening of the world's burden, a place that can only be won by those who face with courage the bearing of their own.



MAROONED *on* TUSCARORA

Edyth A. Ellerbeck



HOW late's that bloomin' stage likely to be?" grumbled Dorsey, pausing in his restless walk long enough to accost the barkeeper at the road house, whose red-veined nose just then projected from the door of the saloon.

"Search me! Hank Burton's drivin' this trip, an' he's got a constitooshonal grudge agin' arrivin' anywhere's on time. Bet ye nuggets to noodles he'd be late to his mother-in-law's fun'r'l!" And the pessimist spat into the road.

"He'll be attendin' his own fun'r'l if he don't pull in 'fore dark. I got to git back to diggin's to-night, an' that froze-up hill ain't no cinch."

Dorsey clapped his pipe impatiently against his heel to empty it, and then absently thrust it into his mouth again, drawing fiercely.

"Spectin' somebody?" queried the barkeeper.

"Surveyor from Boise," was the laconic reply as the old miner turned fretfully away.

Pausing by the watering trough, he opened a huge wallet, drew from it a telegram, and read for the twentieth time:

Will arrive Bigger's Crossing as per instructions Tuesday afternoon stage.

RAY DUNCAN.

When Dorsey had first read the message, its finality had impressed him pleasantly. After a score of rereadings, its brief declaration still rang with a kind of steadfastness to which the plain, short name at the foot had the

effect of a clincher. Dorsey had never seen Ray Duncan; knew no more of him than was told by the advertisement in the *Engineering News*.

Ray Duncan, Civil Engineer. Surveying and Drafting. References: Surveyor General's Office, Boise, Idaho.

The name, out of a half dozen advertising from the same town, had stuck; and to Ray Duncan, therefore, had been dispatched a wire, stating Dorsey's need of a surveyor, and urging all possible haste in reaching Bigger's Crossing.

"An' now he ain't showed up!" muttered Dorsey, as the buckboard, called by courtesy a stage, finally crawled in.

Three women were the sole passengers.

"Hell!" was Dorsey's pregnant comment as he shouldered his duffle bag and strode on up the road.

While the driver gave his beasts a drink and ordered one for himself, two of the women made a slow and ponderous descent, backing out and coming to earth like bags of merchandise. Before they were fairly down, the third passenger poised herself lightly on the wheel; there was a twinkle of tan-clad feet, and a girl touched ground, alighting with a little upward bounce, as if the frozen mud about the trough had been a springboard. Oblivious to the admiration in Hank Burton's eyes for this performance, the young woman walked straight up to the saloon and accosted the barkeeper.

"I'm looking for Mr. James Dorsey," she said, in a mild, direct voice. "Is he here?"

Bill, Hank, and the barkeeper, as if moved by the same wire, each sent an arm out in the direction of Dorsey's back.

"There he goes!"

With a straightforward "Thank you," the girl turned, and sped after the departing miner.

"Say, ain't Dorsey deep?" ejaculated Bill thoughtfully as he turned to the bar.

"Are you Mr. Dorsey?" panted the girl as soon as she had come within conversing distance.

At the sound of his name, Dorsey stopped his angry whirl of thoughts, and stared dumbly at the unfamiliar figure overtaking him.

"I'm James Dorsey," he said deliberately, after a pause of suspicion. "And who may you be?"

"Ray Duncan. Didn't you get my wire?"

"You — Ray — Duncan!" Dorsey weakly collapsed on his duffle bag. "I sent for an engineer," at last he said dully, more to himself than to her.

"I've taken my degree. My transit and tripod are back there in the stage. How far have we to go?"

She spoke in a decisive tone; yet a twinkle of humor gathered in her eyes. It was plain she was enjoying the situation.

"I wasn't reckonin' on a girl," was all the dazed miner could get out.

The girl stiffened a bit.

"Sex doesn't affect mathematics. Surface, underground work, maps, reports—I've done them all. If you'll just wait till I collect my traps——"

"I'll git 'em." Galvanized into action by something commanding in the girl's tone, Dorsey arose. "Jist set on my bag while I git your——"

"Don't bother," she interrupted. "My bag isn't heavy, and I've managed the transit before. If it isn't too much of a pull——"

"It is." Dorsey said briefly, "the deuce of a pull. An' slicker'n a nigger's heel since the frost. We got to make double-quick time, or there's no use tryin' it.

Can't take risks—there's a gang o' ruffians that's layin' low fer a chance to jump in while I'm off. I'll git yer bag now, and come back in the mornin' fer yer transit. Ormbsby'll keep it safe. Be back in a jiffy."

In ten minutes the two were swinging up the steep road, shoulder to shoulder, Miss Duncan bearing her own bag and matching her step with the miner's long stride. The narrow cañon pointed out by Dorsey as their destination was hardly more than a blue thread in the maze of the mountains, now white-wrapped and capped for their winter's sleep. Although it was late in December, the snow which already held the heights had not yet begun its campaign in the valleys and cañons. It was a singularly clear winter for Bigger's Crossing.

The pair walked in unbroken silence, saving breath for the steep climb up Tuscarora. They were in sight of his cabin when Dorsey abruptly stopped, and addressed his companion.

"I say—mebbe I ought to 'a' told ye. 'Tain't no mine this—only a prospect, an' I'm bacin' by myself."

"Think I'll get lonesome?" was her placid retort.

"N-no. That ain't what I had in mind," he stammered awkwardly. "I'm an old feller—old enough to be yer gran'daddy, but folks has a way o' talkin'——"

Miss Duncan raised her square chin scornfully.

"I've voted, broken horses, prospected, pitched hay when hands were short, and if you think I am the sort of frail creature who is afraid of what people say——"

They walked on. The last pale rays of twilight were fading as they reached the miner's cabin. A cave man's hole it might have been, for the solid cliff had been blasted and burrowed into so that the shack was almost wholly within the sheltering walls of stone, its roof flush with the precipitous slope of the mountain-side.

"The snow-slidenist country on the old footstool," explained Dorsey as he perceived her wondering scrutiny of his dwelling. "Lost two cabins 'fore I

thought o' this scheme. Now, I don't budge a hair when I hear a chinook singin'. I waits till the old slide goes boomin' by, then sets up some fresh stovepipes."

She nodded understandingly. The vagaries of this country and climate were an old story to her.

Next morning, at the first gray streak of dawn, Dorsey was up, and, aroused by the tramp of heavy boots on the bare floor, Ray Duncan was not long in following.

"Now, I got to hustle after that transit," said Dorsey. "There's a smell o' snow in the air, an' it's up to me to beat it. It's been so long comin' I was dead sure I could get a surveyor here an' back 'fore it started in. Wouldn't be no joke to git snowed in here, eh?"

For the first time the girl looked rather taken aback.

"I shouldn't care to, that's a fact," she admitted. "I've other work ahead. Is there any danger?"

"Well, if we've any sort o' luck, you kin finish here in a couple o' days. Jist the surface boundaries to define, and a little underground work. I'm in a mix-up with some fellers on t'other side o' that hill. Tried to git me into a 'merger,' but I wouldn't merge. 'Fore I tie up to that Grayhurst gang, I'll know it!"

"Who's Grayhurst?"

"The guy that runs the Bullwhacker over yonder. His crowd needs this prop'ty, and has bowed their necks to git it by hook er by crook—mostly crook. Jist sprung a lawsuit on me 'thout any shadder of a claim. While the suit's pendin' they've laid out to pester me. But I'm on to 'em! Don't I know how their stakes has a way o' growin' up overnight an' blossomin' into location notices 'fore daylight on New Year's? Low-down cusses! I've hung on here alone this far, an', by gum, I'll mine this claim alone long's I kin lift a pick. If any on 'em comes hangin' round here while I'm gone, jist you pump 'em full o' lead. Got a gun?"

"A gun!" Miss Duncan's tone was full of a startled dismay.

Dorsey surveyed her in mild astonishment.

"She's broken hoses, been prospectin', pitched hay, an'-shies at a gun!" he informed the rafters. "Honest, can't you shoot?" he asked incredulously.

"My brother declares I couldn't hit a flock of barns flying low. I hate guns. Especially revolvers. They wobble so," she confessed.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" commented Dorsey, with a shake of his grizzled head.

Then, walking to a corner of the room, he reached behind the stove and took down an aged rifle.

"Here's a barker that's easier handled. It'll do to bluff with, anyhow. You can't take any chances while I'm gone. Those quartz crackers over the hill is jist achin' to jump this little claim while the suit's pendin'. So jist you blaze away first, an' ask fer explanations arterward. Ain't afeerd, be ye?"

He peered at her under knitted brows.

"Of course not," she laughed. "I've tackled too many tough jobs in my day. But Ishan't shoot till I have to."

"Nobody's askin' ye to," he retorted, hiding a smile of satisfaction at her grit. "I'll be back by afternoon, weather permittin'. There's wood in the lean-to, grub in the kitchen, whisky in—" He stopped with a grin. "Well, so long. I'll jist hit the high places!"

He stood a moment thoughtfully staring at the lowering gray sky; shook his shoulders, as trying to loose the foreboding that burdened them, then determinedly struck off down the hill.

Left to herself, Ray Duncan lost no time in contemplating the landscape. Turning in her usual brisk fashion, she set to work with feminine thoroughness to clear up the man-kept, ill-kept quarters; and the day was half gone before she sat down to rest. She arose again at once, drawn to the window by a most unwelcome sight. It was snowing. Not in flakes, the big, feathery flakes of the valley storms, but in clouds of dry, sago-like pellets, wind-blown, drifting, piling in mounds where they met an obstruction.

At four o'clock the darkness had already fallen; the pall of night wrapped cliff and cabin. It was plain Dorsey

could not get back this day. Next morning she arose to look upon a world new born; the snow had ceased, leaving the mountains in the grasp of a chill, white hand. The outlook was more hopeful; but, even if it stormed no more, Dorsey would have a hard struggle to make his way back through the soft, uncrusted snow.

It was the last day of the year. She smiled in half-rueful amusement at her odd situation, and then in sheer ennui went back to her chair by the fire and fell asleep. How long she dozed she did not know. But when she awoke it was to find the fire out, the atmosphere of the room frigid, and a film of ice over the windowpanes. Dazed and chilled, Ray started up. Struck with a sudden sense of foreboding, she hurried over to the window, and, scratching a peephole on the frosted coating, peered out on the polar world just as a strange, fur-clad creature came toiling on all fours through the deep snow on the divide.

With a bound, Ray was at the stove, had seized the old rifle from its pegs, and was back again at the peephole. The quadruped had straightened into a biped, and was approaching the shack. The blood bounded in the girl's veins as she realized the portent of this visit. A claim jumper!

The man stood for a moment a huge, terrifying figure, balancing his ski pole and surveying the premises insolently. The girl could read his conclusions in his bearing. No path broken to the door; no smoke issuing from the chimney; no one at home. The enemy advanced without caution, slipped off his skis, and, taking his pole in both hands, proceeded to storm the door. Shivering with cold and only half awake, Ray tried to muster breath for a warning call, when Dorsey's parting injunction flashed into her mind—"blaze away first, and ask for explanations afterward."

Nerved to action, she raised the gun, resting the barrel along the high window ledge, and pressing the butt firmly against her shoulder.

Several sharp blows on the door thundered in her ears. The girl's numb fin-

gers felt for the trigger. Twice, three times she pressed frantically. There was no response. Then, like a dash of cold water, came the truth—she had forgotten to cock it.

Half frozen by contact with the icy steel, her hands bungled the task, and in the very moment of her attempt a splintering crash shook the cabin, the wooden bolt flew across the room, and the door fell. In the same instant, Ray raised the gun above her head and brought it down with all her strength upon the intruder. There was a moan.

When the horrified girl looked down, she saw the man lying upon the fallen door, his arms bent helplessly under him, and a thin, scarlet stream flowing from a wound on his temple.

The claim jumper opened his eyes, finding that the light hurt, he promptly shut them again. After repeating this performance from time to time, he at last succeeded in making it continuous. But it was a long time before he could tolerate the whitish glare that filled the strange world into which he had awakened. A dull throbbing in one temple made the effort to concentrate his attention indescribably painful; the sensation of a bandage tightly binding his head caused him a fretful wonder.

What could have happened to him? It was very curious. He was in bed; not his own, for the coverlet was a virulent Navaho of the forked-lightning pattern he peculiarly detested. Looking intently at the wall before him, he studied the objects that met his befuddled gaze until he made out of the jumble two or three shelves, whereon varicolored ore samples and coverless magazines hobnobbed sociably with some dainty silver toilet articles, a box of hair pins, and a book of logarithms.

It was most extraordinary. Most extraordinary of all was what his eyes alighted on next; a bundle huddled on a sawed-off log near the foot of the bunk—a skirted figure that looked wonderfully like a woman. Defying the resentful pounding in his temple, he made a superhuman effort, and looked hard at the object. It was a woman! He

breathed heavily. How came a woman into his Eveless world, and why did she cover her face with her hands? Without knowing why, he felt vaguely sorry for her.

"I say—what are you crying about?" he gathered up strength to ask in a faint, worried tone.

As he spoke, Ray Duncan drew her hands away from her face and stared at him incredulously. Then realizing that his eyes were open, alive, and full upon her, she sprang up and seized his wrist in two eager hands.

"You aren't dead?" she quavered happily.

He was, at any rate, sufficiently alive to appreciate the humor of her inquiry.

"Not by a long shot. Not unless this is heaven and you are one of the angels."

"No, you're not dead," she decided, still too agitated to realize her words. "But you are delirious. Angels don't go about trying to kill people."

"Great Scott! Is some one trying to kill me?"

He would have struggled up, his befuddled senses not comprehending, but two strong young arms pressed him firmly back.

"Lie still," Ray commanded. "Of course no one is trying to kill you—now. You are all right, but I daren't let you move yet. I've been half dead with fright about you," she scolded. And then, as he knit his brow in a painful effort to imagine the reason for her fear, she burst out: "Do you know—but of course you don't—that I've been sitting here for hours believing myself your murderer, seeing your death and burial, my trial, conviction, and execution in logical sequence over and over again?"

He shook his head in feeble comprehension.

"How long have I been playing dead?"

"All night. I never saw any one in such a deathly stillness. It was awful. I did everything I knew of, but you simply wouldn't come to." She shuddered.

"Most inconsiderate of me, I'm sure,"

said the man in mock contrition. "It's all a mystery to me. Was it a snow slide, an explosion, or a holdup? I'll burst a blood vessel if I try to think."

"It was an attempted holdup—on your part," replied the girl. "Frustrated by me. If you don't have to think too hard, would you mind telling me just why you came over the divide on the last day of the year?"

The shaft struck home, and the claim jumper reddened. Recollection had come with a rush.

"I remember," he admitted. "I got as far as the door—"

"Bearing in your hands—" she prompted.

"An olive branch!" he cried, with a twinkle that much disturbed her sternness.

"It didn't look like an olive branch," she contended, fixing on him an accusing gray eye.

"Appearances are deceptive," he said flippantly. "Now I can get as far as the door—" he resumed.

"I didn't let you get any farther. I was here on guard. I had been told to watch out for Grayhurst or any other of those—"

"Russians," he finished for her. "I'm Grayhurst, you know, but don't mind me! You had been told—"

"To 'blaze away first, and ask for explanations afterward.' But I couldn't, or the gun wouldn't—blaze. So I used it as a club."

"So that's what hit me. I thought the floor came up!" he cried, and raised one hand to his head.

"No, don't touch that bandage. You'll tear the skin open again. I made rather a neat job of that bandage, I think. My mother always said a good nurse was lost when I went in for engineering," she concluded.

"You went in for what?" Grayhurst shouted.

She reproved him with a look.

"I am a civil engineer," she declared loftily, and then, seeing the twinkle growing in his eyes again, she gave a short laugh. "Uncivil engineer, if you insist. I deserve that."

"So that is how you happen to be in

old Dorsey's cabin—in your professional capacity?"

She nodded.

"I came to do some surveying for Mr. Dorsey. He went down to the Crossing for my transit, and then this snow—"

"Well, I'll be—— If you are not the most extraordinary——" He stared at her in palpable wonder. Then he mused: "I thought the cabin deserted."

"So I gathered," returned Miss Duncan dryly, rising, as if to close the conversation.

She considered this man altogether too coolly complacent about a very grave matter. Jumping a claim was no gentlemanly pursuit, despite the heroics attached. Yet she had to admit that he was a surprisingly decent marauder. His speech was the speech of a gentleman, his face and manner full of a refinement she could scarcely reconcile with Dorsey's unflattering description of his enemy. This was a force that should have been met not with a fusillade of guns, but with a flag of truce. She was not proud of her performance of the day before.

In spite of his inglorious occupation, she felt a sneaking desire to merit the good opinion of this hulking, lawless fellow. Still, true to her training, the training of the coeducated girl for whom the lure and mystery of sex have been dispelled by the close contact of classroom, competition, she was more concerned with getting the caliber of the man than in calculating her own probable effect upon him.

The offender lay calmly scrutinizing her, taking in her every look and action as if they two had met in the most approved fashion, and his position were as unimpeachable as her own. She had no way of knowing that her boyish frankness, her tone of command, and competent handling of the unusual situation had filled his soul with an abiding content. Here was something new under the sun! The girls of his youth—not so long vanished as he chose to think—he remembered as fluffy creatures, afraid of cows and bugs, with a conscious, deeply calculated timidity.

Women of his later manhood had been of many sorts—but none like this.

As he opened his lips in a tentative question, she lifted a warning finger.

"No more conversation, please—you are quite flushed. Obey your nurse now, and go to sleep while I straighten things up and get you some breakfast. You must be faint and weak."

"No, not exactly weak—sort of light-headed in the stomach!" He laughed boyishly.

He had a nice laugh. And Ray looked twice at the rows of even white teeth that gleamed between his parted lips. There was a force about Grayhurst, even as he lay there, that drew her strongly; an elemental vigor that seemed born of this emotional, storm-swept country. His long strife with nature seemed to have bred in him an aggressiveness she felt, and failed to meet with her own. Vaguely annoyed at her lack of resentment, she turned away, and in her usual deft fashion began putting the little room in order.

She would have liked to go to him again, smooth his pillow, and cool his forehead as she had done before; but there was now a softened look in his eyes that made it impossible for her to do it without self-consciousness. Instead, she smoothed her own hair, gathered up some scattered towels, and then with a peremptory, "Keep quiet, now," walked coolly from the room.

Grayhurst smiled quietly into space for a few minutes; then, concluding to resign himself to the orders of this high-handed young person, composed himself to sleep.

The welcome aroma of steaming coffee greeted his nostrils when he awoke. That and his short, natural sleep put new vitality into him. He arose, made what toilet was possible, and then walked resolutely, if a trifle weakly, to the boxlike apartment that served as kitchen. Noiselessly he peered in at the young engineer, who, turned cook for the time being, was energetically stirring a great kettleful of dried apples.

Recognizing the homely fragrance, Grayhurst stood sniffing the air like a pointer, until Miss Duncan, turning

from her task, caught sight of him, and stood, spoon in hand, transfixed with surprise.

"You're sure you are able to be up?" she asked, in some concern.

"Perfectly fit. Just a mite weak-kneed and wobbly. I'll be ready for a hike as soon as I get some of that good coffee in me. Gods, but I'm hungry!"

"I should think you would be. Can you wait two minutes? My biscuits are just browning." She gave a quick glance into the oven.

"Biscuits? Say, they look good enough to eat!" he cried.

Seating himself on a corner of the wood box, he gazed at Miss Duncan quizzically.

"Isn't it rather unusual for a—professional woman to excel in so old-fashioned an art as cooking?"

"Not at all. Domestic science fits in nicely with differential calculus. The old theory that a cook, like a poet '*nascitur, non fit,*' has been exploded. Exchange the plum bob for the measuring cup, be as exact with one as with the other, and you'll get results. I like cooking now that I know *why* as well as *how*. I cooked for a girls' club, and earned my way through college, so I've had plenty of opportunity to practice both professions."

"Bully for you!" he said heartily, wondering as he spoke if most girls would have told it.

"Now prove yourself a brave trencherman and fall to," commanded the cook, and Grayhurst was not slow to obey.

"I'm not at all sure of the ethics of this," commented Miss Duncan as she poured the coffee.

"Ethics?" He reached ravenously for the cup.

"Dispensing Mr. Dorsey's hospitality to—"

"His enemy?" he supplied.

"Suppose we call you 'prisoner of war.' On that status, according to the Hague, you have a right to these rations. But just what are you, anyway?"

A level glance from her eyes showed her serious.

"A cumb'r of the earth, John Gray-

hurst, at your service." He bowed. "And my jailer?"

"Ray Duncan—I forgot you didn't know. But I did not ask *who*," she said significantly.

He ate two biscuits with close attention to the opening and buttering of them before he raised his eyes. Then he pushed away his plate, leaned back on his box, and folded his arms.

"Now I have something to lean on, oh, wise young judge, would the court please put the question in a clearer form?"

The lips jested, but the eyes were as serious as her own.

She met him in the same spirit.

"Why did you come over here?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a long story. To tell the last chapter first isn't good art. A knowledge of past deeds, actors, and motives is essential to a proper understanding of the plot. Do you know Dorsey well?"

"Not at all," she answered. "I came in answer to a telegram. I never saw him until four days ago. I can imagine that he's—odd."

"Odd!" He laughed mirthlessly. "He's the most bull-headed, shortsighted, moss-backed antediluvian old fossil that ever located a claim!"

She chuckled.

"I could think of more if I tried," he assured her, with a smile. "If you only knew how that man has thwarted and harassed me! And thwarted himself, too, the idiot! Suspicion is the mainspring of his life, and he turns down every effort to benefit him as if it were a plot to accomplish his ruin. My claims are on the other side of that hill. I've the richest ore hereabouts. I've capital, machinery, besides my own equipment of energy, and—you'll pardon the assumption—brains to develop the property. On the other hand, I've no water, no good mill site."

"This side the hill Dorsey has made several locations. Distrusting every one equally, he refuses even to hire help, tries to do all the assessment work by himself, uses the most antiquated methods, has neither machinery nor capital, and manages to keep just an inch

ahead of starvation. Consolidation means more to him than to me. With this water and mill site, my machinery and methods, one shaft to work both properties—there's a fortune in it for both of us. I've made the fairest offers any man could devise, made every concession I honestly could, and he meets me with a six-shooter for argument! Because he was robbed in a partnership once, he has set all men down as thieves and liars, and you'd have to give him an anesthetic to pry that idea out of his stupid old head."

Miss Duncan gave an almost imperceptible smile.

"I tried every fair means to get sense into him," Grayhurst continued, with gathering resentment, "then I got tired. I made up my mind that I'd try the other thing. I knew his assessment work wasn't done—why, he hasn't made money enough to pay for grub, let alone powder and tools. Some of our fellows saw him down at the Crossing. I seized the occasion and my skis—and here I am. But I hope you will believe, Miss Duncan, that I intended to keep within the letter of the law, and meant, once I had the upper hand, to do the right thing by Dorsey."

He sought her honest gray eyes anxiously. Her good opinion seemed worth more, just at this minute, than the success of his errand.

She mused, chin in palm.

"You forced the door."

"Granted. Having taken the enemy's territory, I meant to hold the fort until he capitulated. Then I should have dictated terms—generous ones. You'll give me credit for that?"

She bestowed on him a keen, appraising glance. The judging business woman was uppermost in her now, pondering the case, weighing the pleader. And deeper than all charm of feature, deeper than the attraction of his huge, wholesome frame, with its leonine strength and abounding vitality, she saw the real mettle of the man.

She reached a hand across the table, and gave him a hearty, masculine grip.

"I believe you," she said briefly.

In his pleasure, perhaps he held her

hand a second too long, for she rose abruptly.

"Now, I wonder where I put that hatchet?"

"Why, I thought we'd buried it!" he cried, with specious dismay.

She laughed, with a gleam in her eye that made him wonder why he had mentally dubbed her plain.

"It must be resurrected at once," she explained. "I need it to repair the injury you inflicted in your hasty entrance. The door sags and the living room is cold as a barn."

She fished down into the wood box and brought up the missing tool.

"Permit me," he begged, but she shook her head and led the way into the main room.

"You may hold it in place while I persuade the nails," she ordered.

Standing on a box, she fitted the leather hinges over the old grooves, while Grayhurst applied one shoulder as a brace.

"Sure you're to be trusted with that weapon?" he asked teasingly.

"Oh, I can hammer straighter than I can shoot," she parried, convincingly bringing down the hatchet on a rusty nail.

Grayhurst looked up at her in covert admiration; every minute showed a new side to this astounding modern product. The courage, the boyish camaraderie, and the indomitable youth of her constituted for him compelling forces in her armament. Into his dark eyes there crept an expression that disconcerted the young carpenter as her glance happened to meet his. The next blow of the hatchet fell on the wrong nail, and the girl gave a little wince of pain.

"Damn!" cried Grayhurst. "That's a beastly shame. What can I do?"

"Keep on swearing, please," she begged. "My vocabulary is too limited for the occasion. And for goodness sake don't let the door wabble so," she scolded.

"It feels as if some one were pushing it in," he complained, taking a fresh brace.

"Lemme in!" came a hoarse growl from without.

Grayhurst fell back, while Miss Duncan remained with hatchet poised aloft, as the door sagged open, and Jim Dorsey's irate face glared in upon them.

"Barrin' a man from his own house, eh?" began the old man when his eye fell suddenly upon his enemy. "Jack Grayhurst—ye sneak! What ye doin' here?" he demanded, an ugly intent evident in his distorted face and knotted fist.

Instantly Ray leaped from her box, and interposed herself squarely between the belligerents.

"Mr. Grayhurst is my guest here," she explained breathlessly, avoiding all eyes.

"Yer guest! Then ye're in league with that gang?" Dorsey blazed accusingly at her.

"Not at all," she denied, affecting lightness, while her heart quickened. "I never met the gentleman until yesterday, when we'er-scraped acquaintance, you might say, and—"

"I'm not ashamed of my presence here," interrupted Grayhurst, scorning to hide behind a woman's skirts. "I didn't come over the hill in the garb of the dove of peace, I confess, and the reception accorded me by your consulting engineer was one that would have met with your entire approval, I am sure."

Grayhurst touched his bandaged head with a mocking lightness.

Dorsey's eyes traveled in puzzled wonder from Grayhurst to the wrecked door, and then to the girl, who still stood, hatchet in hand, hesitating between laughter and fear. Catching the glint of amusement, the old man stiffened again.

"Mebbe my streak o' humor has pinched out, fer I'm blamed if I can see where the joke comes in. Was there a scrap?"

"There was," Grayhurst assured him gravely. "Your house was defended bravely, and the besieger fell. Your engineer seems to have your interests deeply at heart, Dorsey."

A grin slowly overspread the miner's face. He held out a calloused palm to the girl.

"Soaked it to him, did ye? Jist put that in the bill!"

Miss Duncan wormed her fingers from his grasp uncomfortably—rather regretting the action a moment later when she saw Dorsey's hand go to his hip pocket, as he once more turned upon Grayhurst.

"And now, you," he growled, "I guess we kin dispense with yer comp'ny from now on."

Grayhurst's mouth set.

"Not so fast, my friend. We've a long-standing dispute to settle first."

"We can settle that damn quick if you'll come outside!"

Shaking with fury, Dorsey pulled his gun.

Grayhurst did not budge. A sneer curled his lip, and his eyes insolently measured his opponent.

"Your usual form of argument. Seems to me a man of your years might put away such toys."

Dorsey danced with rage.

"Come outside, ye coward!" he yelled.

"Mr. Dorsey!" Miss Duncan spoke quietly, though her lips were white. Unwillingly the old man turned half-way to her, keeping his eyes on Grayhurst. "You are convinced that I have defended your interests here?"

"I be. But this is a man's quarrel—keep yer jaw," he grumbled.

Grayhurst's brow darkened.

"Keep a civil tongue in your head before a lady, do you hear? But for her my location notices would now be decorating your claims. And I've a legal right to put them up yet. Your assessment work isn't done."

A shade of gray crept over the old man's face.

"How do you come to know so much?" he sneered.

"I made it my business to find out. The game's up for you, Dorsey, and, though you don't deserve it, I'm ready to make terms. Heroics and gun play went out of fashion years ago, and the up-to-date man settles things with his brains. If you've got any, here's a good chance to show them. It's up to you."

His cool, easy manner stung Dorsey into shame. He pocketed his pistol.

"What's yer proposition?" he asked finally, with an attempt at the other's bluff tone.

"The same as I've always made. A third interest in the consolidated properties."

"Make it a half," Dorsey stubbornly bargained.

Grayhurst shrugged his shoulders in disgust.

"Take it or leave it. I've said my last word. Grub along as you're doing, keep your nose to the grindstone, waste years in senseless litigation, and spend your last penny on the fight—just remember, I am prepared to *go on fighting*."

"Like to know how much yer prop'ty's worth without my water rights!" Dorsey jeered.

"About as much as yours without capital and brains to develop it. Ask any expert the relative values. And, by the way, we've an engineer right here. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I have every confidence in Miss Duncan's ability; she has already demonstrated her loyalty to you. Let her arbitrate our claims." He folded his arms.

Dorsey blinked. Affairs were moving a bit rapidly for this offshoot of a former generation. He shot a swift glance at the girl. Honest, fearless, self-possessed now, she met his gaze unwaveringly. Suspicion in the old man's eyes gave way by degrees to dawning faith, and then conviction.

"Blowed if I won't!" he cried.

The color surged back in a flood to the girl's face.

"You shall never regret it!" she said earnestly, and, dropping the hatchet, held out her hand. "You must have some dinner, and then I'll get to work. Where's my transit?"

"Down at the Crossin' waiting fer ye," replied Dorsey. And then as a protest grew in her eyes: "Yell do no work this trip. It's goin' to snow like all get out, and you've got to beat it to Boise. Git yer duds and we'll be off."

She opened her lips stubbornly, but Grayhurst forestalled her.

"Dorsey is right. You've no time to lose. Our business can wait till spring, but we can't afford to pay an engineer while she is snowed in."

Thus presented, the affair changed its aspect; and Miss Duncan bowed to fate and the weather. Fifteen minutes later the three were skiing down the toboggan slide of a road to the Crossing.

Once there, Miss Duncan, seemingly the only passenger, was helped to her place with great ceremony by the combined efforts of Dorsey and Jack Grayhurst; her bag installed as a rest for her feet; the entire supply of rugs and robes in the stage wrapped about, under, and over her. She managed, however, to extract one mitten hand, and held it out to Dorsey in farewell.

"I'll be back in March!" she assured him, shaking the miner's hand in a vigorous, manly fashion. Then, turning to offer her hand to Grayhurst, she found him settling himself cozily beside her. "All aboard!" she chanted. "All out!"

"All aboard!" he echoed, with a nod to the driver.

That worthy clucked, whacked his steeds with the reins, and the buckboard swung down the road.

"Why didn't you get out?" demanded Miss Duncan.

"Didn't want to," laconically.

"Where are you going?"

"To the railroad."

A little frown of resentment grew between the girl's brows.

"If you imagine I need an escort——"

"Not at all. I've a purely selfish consideration. Fact is, I'm going farther than the Junction. I haven't tried a Pullman for months, and——"

"Do you mean you are going on the train?"

With a great show of nonchalance, Grayhurst settled himself comfortably on the seat, stretching out his long legs and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets. Thus securely ensconced for the journey, he turned his reddening face away from the gray eyes frankly questioning his own as he replied:

"Um-hum! You see—I've important business in Boise."

SUPPRESSED EVIDENCE

By Samuel Gordon



THIS was a raw, foggy November morning when Mark Harraway left off being a number and became a man again. As he stepped into the open, he turned and paused for a few moments to gaze at the grim building which had housed him for nearly four years. And as he looked, a smile broadened across his face. It tickled him to think of the practical joke he had played on the majesty and infallibility of the law.

The learned judge, who, according to the evidence before him, had complacently meted out due punishment to a malefactor, had sentenced a perfectly innocent man. Mark Harraway knew he could have proved it easily enough. In fact he had been half afraid that the judge would see through his imposition. He wondered if it was criminal in a man to conduce to a miscarriage of justice where he himself was the sufferer. Other grotesque considerations of his case crowded upon him till he almost laughed aloud.

And now for the business in hand. The first thing he did was to make a bee line across London in the direction of the southwestern suburbs toward which his thoughts had strayed and strained all during the time of his incarceration. As he reached the top of the busy, medium-sized street, which was the more immediate destination, he drew up short for an instant, and then, pulling his hat lower down over his forehead and tightening his muffler well

over his chin, he walked with a brisk but stealthy stride down the left pavement, keeping his eyes sidelong to the right.

He made no attempt to put a curb on his emotions. His heart beat fast, and the blood drummed loudly in his ears. A good deal depended on what the next few moments would reveal to him.

And presently he gave a sharp-drawn gasp as he caught sight of a name over a shop, a neat, prosperous-looking stationer's shop. Almost in the same flash of the eye he noted the woman who was serving behind the counter. She was rather a tall woman, or else her head would not have been so plainly visible over the ledge at the back of the shop window.

So far so good, thought Harraway. The same shop, the same woman—or at any rate only with such alterations as time and circumstances might have brought forth. Perhaps he might get a glimpse of the boy as well. But no, Eric was probably in school by now. He had better get on. If he hung about his wife might catch sight of him. She had sharp eyes, and he was as yet not fit to be seen by her.

From there Mark Harraway went to gather up the next thread of the old life. This time his errand took him to Wandsworth Common. He had to find something there.

When, however, he came to the edge of the great expanse, his face fell as he realized the difficulty of his quest.

He was looking for a certain tree, and there were many trees there, all very much like each other as they stood up gaunt and bleak in their wintry nakedness. He thought he had the position of this particular tree fixed firmly in his memory, and now his mind drifted rudderless in an uncharted waste.

No wonder—his sense of locality had not had much chance of exercising itself during the last four years. Yet find it he must. And pursuing his search with patient doggedness, he at last came upon it just as the short day was giving out.

It was a gnarled old yew, and at the bottom of the trunk a keenly observant eye might have noted the mark of a choked-up hole. Down he went on his hands and knees, and with eager fingers began to scrape away the mixture of moss and stones with which he himself had corked up the orifice last time he was here. More and more frantically he dug until, with a sob of relief, he came upon his hidden treasure.

The hidden treasure was in the shape of an old waterproof tobacco pouch, containing—not, as one might have expected from his eagerness, some precious jewel, but merely a piece of note paper; to wit, a letter, the lines of which, as he could perceive in the gathering dusk, stood out fresh and unfaded, thanks to the protecting envelope. It was the letter which he should have shown to the judge.

And now at last he was free to attend to his bodily wants. He sped away to an eating house, and from there to a clothier's place where, with part of the money handed to him on leaving the prison, he procured a complete rig-out. The salesman watched him with curious interest—he seemed to have a notion of the customer's more recent history—but Mark Harraway did not mind at all. His thoughts were intent on what lay before him that evening.

There were a few more hours to kill, for he did not want to present himself to his wife till she had closed the shop. He had an idea she would prefer to welcome him in the greater privacy of the little parlor upstairs. He could eas-

ily pass the time in speculating as to the degree of warmth that would attend his home-coming.

A little past nine he was back again outside the shop in the street he had passed that morning. He stood hesitating for a moment or two, and then, hitching forward his shoulders in token of his determination, he beat a modest but firm rat-tat at the door of the private side entrance.

In response swift footsteps came bounding lightly down the staircase, the door opened cautiously a few inches, and through the aperture a boy piped shrilly:

"Who's that? There's nobody in."

Mark Harraway gave a big gulp before he answered. It seemed to him an almost incredible thing that he was actually listening to his child's voice again.

"But you're in, Eric. You're somebody, aren't you?" he asked, with a cheeriness of tone it cost him a great effort to feign.

Without waiting for a reply, he gently widened the opening, and squeezed his way through. For the space of a few seconds he stood in the dimly lit passage, aimlessly patting the boy's head, till he felt the latter edging away.

"Yes, yes, silly of us to stop down here in the cold, eh, youngster?" he continued, with the same forced gayety. "Let's come upstairs, and have a good look at you."

With evident diffidence the little fellow, a sturdy lad some ten years of age, followed him up to the cozy and comfortably furnished room, rendered still cozier by the bright blaze in the fireplace. The sight of it gave Mark Harraway a sort of retrospective shiver as he contrasted his present surroundings with the murky desolation of the cell he had left behind.

From the other side of the table, which he seemed to regard as a kind of bulwark, the boy was staring at him in fearful bewilderment. Harraway fixed him with a tremulous smile, and then turned his gaze awkwardly to the lad's playthings—a tumbled heap of toy bricks.

"Been building castles, have you? Now let's sit down and do one together."

"But—but you're dad!" exclaimed the lad, finding his voice at last.

"What, just found it out?" asked Harraway, his smile flickering still more uncertainly. "Well, no wonder it took you such a time. I should hardly have recognized you, either. You've grown quite a man. Er—er—you said mother was out."

"Gone shopping. She'll be back soon."

Harraway's muscles seemed to tighten visibly.

"How is she—all right?"

"Yes, thank you, quite all right. She said—"

Eric broke off, and fumbled at the seam of his trousers.

"Yes, old man, she said?" Harraway urged him encouragingly.

"That you were never coming back," blurted out Eric.

"Did she indeed?" said Harraway, biting his lip. "Evidently a case of the thought being father to the wish. No, you needn't try to understand that—it's over your head," he replied to the boy's blank look. "Let's see, though—did she say anything else about me?"

"She said I wasn't ever to speak of you."

Harraway's face darkened.

"Oh, quite so, Eric. And—and did she by any chance ever tell you where I've been all this time?"

"No, she didn't. But I knew."

"Oh, you did—how was that?" asked Harraway, trying to keep an even voice and mien.

"I wasn't sure till one day Fred Hickory put a picture in my locker."

"Yes, put a picture in your locker—what picture?"

"A man with a sort of baker's cap on and arrows all over him. And underneath he'd written: 'Eric Harraway's father.' And the other boys said it was true. I gave him a black eye for it."

Harraway laughed a hollow laugh.

"That was good. I suppose you told mother about it."

"I did. I tell her everything. And she cried."

"Cried—why?"

"Don't know. I think she was so angry about it all."

"I expect she was. Tell me, has she been crying much?"

"No, that's the only time I ever saw her."

Harraway's teeth came together with a snap. There were other questions that were trembling on his tongue, but he refrained. In the shameful years that had passed he had rubbed shoulders with the dregs of creation, but he had taken care that his sense of what was honorable should suffer no abatement. He had certainly not become so degraded as to inveigle this unsuspecting child into giving testimony against his mother. Whatever there was to find out, he would ascertain in the straight way of a man. He would have his opportunity soon enough. And almost the very next instant he heard the rattle of a key, and then the street door slammed.

"There—that's mother. I told you she wouldn't be long," cried Eric, hurrying out to the stairs.

"Who's that you are talking to, Eric?" a voice asked sharply to the accompaniment of swiftly ascending footsteps.

Harraway stood facing the door, his shoulders squared, his mouth set firm; his manner showed a strange mingling of defense and defiance. He tried hard to persuade himself that there was nothing really momentous about the occasion, that his wife would accept it as being in the ordinary course of events.

But his first glance at the woman who stepped into the room, the dumfounded anger, the cold contempt and indignation in her eyes, made him cower back involuntarily. He only noted vaguely that she had lost little of her good looks, though her eyes were a trifle faded, and the lines of her mouth, which had been neither soft nor full at the best of times, now appeared hardened and strained. She had placed her parcels on the table and stared at him, apparently at a loss for words. He waited.

"You!" she gasped at last.

"Well, and why not me, Emily?" he answered quietly.

She turned abruptly to the boy.

"Eric, go to bed!"

The lad showed signs of demur.

"Go to bed at once!" she repeated peremptorily.

Slowly and with a doubtful look from his father to his mother and back again, the boy left the room.

"Yes, that's it," resumed Harraway, "I'm out on ticket of leave. I got the usual remission for good conduct."

"And you had the face to come here!" she cried, with flashing eyes.

"Steady, there, Emily," he remonstrated. "That's not the idea nor the object of the law. When a man has done his punishment people are supposed to accept him again as a respectable member of society. I don't say that everybody acts up to that, but a man may expect it at least of his wife."

"You mean last of all of his wife," she retorted in a tone of biting scorn, "the wife he has disgraced, whose whole life he has made a martyrdom. I thought I hadn't left any doubt in your mind that I never wanted to set eyes on you again."

"Oh, yes, I admit you didn't leave any doubt about that," he said bitterly. "You didn't take the trouble to attend the trial, though that was perhaps excusable. But it wouldn't have done you any harm to have answered my letters."

"Your letters!" she echoed scornfully.

"It put me in a rather awkward position," he went on. "Of course the governor knew I had written to you and that there never was any reply. It—well, it made me look a bit small."

"Really?" she sneered. "I didn't know they allowed you to be so sensitive in the place where you were."

"At last the governor offered to write you himself, but I wouldn't have it," he proceeded, ignoring the interruption. "I thought it better to wait till the spirit moved you to give me news of yourself and boy without anybody's interference."

"How considerate. Well, you had to

wait a long while, didn't you?" And then she flung the question at him suddenly: "What do you want—what have you come for?"

He passed his hand across his hair once or twice before he answered.

"Well, Emily, in the first place, I suppose, to have a glimpse at you and the boy."

"In the first place—and what next?"

"To—well, to make arrangements."

"Arrangements? Pray, what sort of arrangements?"

"For our future, Emily."

"I haven't the faintest notion what you mean," she said icily.

"I'll explain. I can quite understand that it may embarrass you somewhat to have me about the house again. I dare say people will eye us rather askance and shrug their shoulders. So I suggest that we cut the whole bag of tricks here and emigrate. My brother—Ted, you know—has written me that there is plenty of work and a good living waiting for me on his farm in Canada, and that he will do all he can to put me on my feet. We're not too old to make a new start, Emily."

She looked at him, angry amazement written all over her face. Then she laughed shrilly.

"You're mad—absolutely mad. Do you really expect me to take up life again with a—murderer?"

"Hold hard, Emily. It wasn't murder. They brought it down to manslaughter."

"As if that could make the slightest difference! For me it's enough that the guilt of blood is on your hands. And the man you killed was my best friend. Poor, poor Ralph!"

A sob half of anger, half of self-commiseration, punctuated the sentence.

"Well, Emily, if you ask my candid opinion," said Harraway, after a momentary pause, "a woman has no right to have a best friend—when she happens to be already provided with a husband."

"Oh, I don't care," she cried passionately; "I may as well own up to it. I always cared more for Ralph Broughton than for you. We had been sweet-

hearts ever since we were children, right up to the time when he went abroad. Fool that I was not to have waited for him a little longer. Only you kept bothering and bothering till you tired me out. Oh, why didn't he come back three months earlier, and then"—her sobs broke out anew—"he might have been alive now."

"Yes, it's very unfortunate," murmured Harraway vaguely.

"Unfortunate you dare to call it," she flared up afresh, "to let your wicked temper run away with you as you did, to lure him into a quiet corner and there to deal him a mortal blow—you murdered him as surely as if you had plunged a knife into his heart."

"I suppose so," said Harraway pensively. "Fancy, though, his having such a weak heart. He didn't look it, did he?"

"And then, like the coward you were, you ran away."

"No, Emily," he broke in quickly, "you forget that I gave myself up."

"Hours later—after you had had time to think better of it. You knew you couldn't get away. Any number of people had seen you leave the club together, and you couldn't very well have accounted for your movements. So you made a virtue of a necessity. Oh, poor Ralph—one of the best men that ever walked this earth!"

"Yes, it seems he was really a very decent sort of fellow," agreed Harraway quietly.

"And that's why you killed him!" she flashed at him.

"Perhaps, though I didn't find it out till it was too late."

"What do you mean?" she asked sharply.

"I don't know that I mean anything in particular," said Harraway, with a quizzical smile.

"You may joke if you like," she exclaimed fiercely, "but I'm going to tell you something that'll be dead earnest. I'm done with you. If all the angels from heaven came to ask me to take you back as my husband, I wouldn't do it. You're perfectly right. Go to your precious brother in Canada. You

haven't much to expect here. A ticket of leave is not considered a first-class recommendation in the city. Once more—we have finished."

Harraway had grown white to the lips.

"By Jove, Emily, I didn't think you would be as hard on me as all this," he said voicelessly.

"What, then—that I would fall round your neck? Thank Heaven, I've kept the respect and sympathy of my friends through it all, and I don't mean to forfeit them now by condoning your crime."

"H'm! I suppose that settles the matter," he said, looking down at his boots.

"I'm glad you're taking it sensibly."

"I don't know that I am, Emily," he said darkly.

She shot him a swift look of alarm.

"What's in your mind?" she asked.

"I don't know. I've got to find out myself first."

"Well, then, don't be too long about it," she retorted, having recovered her resolution. "I'm waiting to bolt the front door."

"All right, all right. You'll be rid of me soon enough. Only—well, there are a few odds and ends of mine here I'd like to take away with me."

"It's too late now. I'll pack them all up, and send them on to you. I'm not anxious to keep any mementos of yours."

Harraway caught at the idea which her words had suggested to him.

"And suppose a man were to be seen leaving your house at this time of night? It might be awkward for you. People mightn't know it was your husband, nor probably, for the matter of that, would you like them to know."

He saw from her startled manner that he had made an impression on her, and proceeded rapidly:

"I'm not going to put you to any trouble. This armchair will do me for the night—it's quite as comfortable as what I've been used to of late. And in the morning I can slip away through the shop entrance just like an ordinary cus-

tomer, and no one need be any the wiser. What do you say, Emily?"

She looked at him searchingly, suspiciously.

"I don't know what you are driving at," she said finally.

"Nothing at all, I assure you. I'm only thinking of you."

"Yes, and have the gas going all night," she said inconsequently.

"I'll turn the gas down."

"Oh, very well, then," she consented, after some little further hesitation. "But, mind you, no tricks. Out you go the first thing in the morning. You know I'm not to be played wi'."

"That's all right, Emily; that's all right."

"I'll take good care that it is."

And with this final thrust she quickly and unceremoniously left the room. Harraway stared for a few moments at the blank, irresponsible door she had closed on him. He knew he would have taken his dismissal with as little protest even if she had not possessed the legal right with which to back it up.

The shop and the furniture were hers, having come down to her from her parents who had lived here before her. His wife had attended to the business, while he had earned a fairly good salary as a clerk. He did not quite know whether the law had left him anything open in the way of restitution of conjugal rights. At any rate, he was not going to find out. He had had enough of the law.

He lifted himself stiffly from the chair into which he had sunk, and commenced to pace softly up and down the room. A strange revulsion of feeling had taken place in him. He was now almost sorry that he had stayed. To have gained a few hours' respite by subterfuge and entreaty was nearly as undignified as to have been kicked out incontinently like a stray cur. The humiliation of it was hardly worth the gratifying of the vague craving to breathe, if but for a brief while, the old familiar atmosphere of the place, to recapture his most cherished association of this abode in which, with all drawbacks, he had enjoyed a tolerable

amount of contentment if not of absolute happiness. It held for him memories which he was anxious to garner so that he might feed his heart on them in the empty years that loomed ahead.

Well, it might have been worse. He might have humbled himself into confessing to his wife that he still loved her. He might have told her how sorry he was for her that he was himself instead of being Ralph Broughton.

He shivered, for the room was getting cold. The fire had died down in the grate, and he looked longingly at the well-filled coal scuttle. But he had as little right to the fuel as he had to the gas. His wife had forgotten to mention anything about the coal. There was not much else she had forgotten to mention. In fact, nothing except what was stated in the letter he had in his coat pocket.

And why had he not mentioned it himself? Because it would have served no purpose. Nothing in this world, it was pretty certain, would ever make things come right between them, and the sooner he regulated his actions in accordance with that certainty, the better.

So much for his wife. Now for the boy. Harraway had nursed half a hope that the fact of his disgrace had been kept from his son. It was a great disappointment for him. Nay, more, it was quite evident that the lad fully realized the extent of his father's shame. Fred Hickory's black eye was conclusive proof of that. And if he felt it now, how much more as he grew older?

And that was not the worst of it. The sins of the parents were visited on the children. It was extremely possible that the possession of an ex-convict father would handicap him hopelessly in the race of life. That was a point which required careful handling.

Almost for the first time since his conviction, Harraway's mind encompassed the grievousness of the wrong he had inflicted on his innocent child. He had looked forward with a kind of self-mortifying pleasure to seeing the

boy again in the morning—possibly that had been his real reason for wishing to stay overnight. But now he felt he could not face him. In those unconscious eyes he would read a silent accusation to which his wife's loud-voiced hatred was as an endearing caress.

The thought of it stung him like the lash of a whip. Yes, yes, he had better go at once. He could steal down unobserved—he remembered the geography of the house well enough. Let his wife think of his disappearance what she liked.

He opened the door and listened. All was quiet. The staircase used to creak rather badly, but he could manage it with extra care. The front door would probably bang and wake her up. What if it did? He would be beyond her reach, and she would hardly take the trouble to give him chase.

Tiptoeing along, he had got as far as the top of the landing, when suddenly a streak of light flashed across the gloom. In the doorway of her bedroom stood Mrs. Harraway, holding a candle high over her head. She was fully dressed, and her brows were knitted with menacing wrath.

"What are you up to?" she cried.

"Nothing—only I—I—" stammered Harraway.

"I thought there was something behind all this. You see you can't get the better of me. What were you after—the till?"

"Excuse me, Emily; a man that's played at murder doesn't stoop to petty larceny," he replied grimly.

"No—what, then?" She gasped, and her hand went to her heart. "Oh, I see. You were trying to kidnap the boy."

"H'm! As a matter of fact, that didn't strike me. I admit it's a good idea, though perhaps difficult of execution. Eric might have had something to say in the matter."

"Something? A good deal, I assure you. And to save you putting yourself to any further inconvenience, I'll make the thing absolutely plain to you. I warn you never to approach him. It will be perfectly useless. He doesn't

know everything yet, but now I shall tell him. One never knows what a boy may feel inclined to do when he can act for himself, and I shall take my precautions."

Her words had a strange effect on Harraway. They at last made him gauge to the full the catastrophe with which he was face to face. His heart lifted itself in revolt against the gratuitousness, against the wanton torment of it all. He would be sinning against himself if he did not strike at least one blow to vindicate the outraged claims of his fatherhood. He must reconcile himself to the loss of his wife—there was no alternative to that. But he must do what he can to prevent her robbing him utterly of his child. And so that letter must play its part, after all.

Resolutely he stepped past her, and walked back into the room, turned the gas up, and planted himself firmly with his back to the mantelshelf, while she at first watched him with indignant surprise, and then stood facing him with trepidant expectancy.

"Changed your mind again?" she asked, with affected flippancy.

"No, no; I'm going right enough—don't be afraid. But first I want to come to a proper understanding with you about the boy."

"Oh! I thought we had done that already."

"Partly. I'm afraid that my chances of getting him away from you are small. But I want to make sure that, although I may never see him again, something of him should be left to my share."

"That's rather a curious idea, isn't it?"

"Not as curious as you think. You've poisoned the boy's mind against me, and you have threatened to do worse. You are not going to carry out your threat, Emily."

"We shall see. Who's going to stop me?"

"I shall. And not only that, but you are going to undo all the mischief you have done already," he went on, with quiet impressiveness. "I am going to make sure that he won't go on thinking

all his life that his father was a black-guardly ruffian."

"I don't quite see how you are going to do that," she said defiantly.

"You will have to do it for me, Emily. And there's only one way about it. When you tell him the full story of my—my misadventure, you will have to make out that I was really not the guilty party, that I was the victim of circumstances, and—"

"You want me to say that?" she broke in.

"You must, Emily."

She broke into a shrill but uneasy laugh.

"Upon my word, that's good. No, thank you. I let everybody do their own lying."

"Yes, you'll have to be careful there. You mustn't let it appear that it's a trumped-up tale," he said, fixing her with a strangely purposeful and significant look. "Now, just let me suggest to you how you might word it. You might say that my fatal bout of fist-cuffs with Ralph Broughton was forced on me by him. Yes—let me see, he forced it on me so that he might have a pretext to give me in charge for assault and battery."

She staggered back with a choking little gasp.

"He had a special reason for it," continued Harraway, pretending not to notice her agitation. "Say he did it at your suggestion. You had been intending to run away with him for some time, but I wouldn't give you the opportunity, as I was constantly in and out of the house, and you were consequently not free to make your arrangements. If I were kept under lock and key for a week or two you would have time to sell the shop and furniture, and give yourself a good start to get yourself and the boy out of my reach. Only, of course, the thing turned out rather differently."

"Stop!" she cried, ashen pale.

"Yes?" He paused obediently for her to recover herself.

"So he told you!" she gasped.
"He—"

"No, he didn't. You did."

Her chest heaved tumultuously, and she steadied herself dizzily against the nearest chair.

"Not by word of mouth, I mean, but even more plainly by black on white." And deliberately taking the letter from his pocket, Harraway threw it on the table. "Ralph gave it to me. He just had time for it after that unlucky blow. 'Take it, Mark,' he said, 'in case there's any trouble over this.' I told you he was rather a decent fellow."

"My letter—the last one I wrote him," she murmured, shrinking away from it.

"Yes, you never expected to set eyes on it again, did you?" he asked. "Well, now that we are having it out, I may as well tell you the rest. I saw he was dead, and that I couldn't do any good for him. And then I got into a panic. I took to my heels till I had put a couple of miles between him and me, and then I stopped to read the letter, and that seemed to send me off my balance altogether. I ran about like a mouse in a trap, trying to find a safe hiding place for it—that's how it came that I didn't give myself up till some hours afterward."

"A hiding place for the letter?" she queried, bewildered.

"Of course I might have torn it up and got rid of it that way, but I wanted to keep it—not to convince you, but to convince myself. I knew the business would mean a few years for me, and people get all sorts of queer ideas in prison, and, to make sure, when I got out, of documentary evidence that it hadn't been my fault—"

He felt that his words were getting a little incoherent, and he broke off, brushing his hand across his forehead where the remembered agony of that dreadful night stood out in thick beads of perspiration. She meanwhile was staring at him, trying hard to dissemble her secret fear. Was she alone in the house with a madman? There could be no doubt that his killing of Ralph Broughton had unhinged his mind, or else— She could not resist the impulse to put her thoughts into words.

"But that letter—it would have got you off—you had only to produce it," she cried half at random.

His whole attitude became one of incredulous surprise.

"Come, Emily; you don't know what you're saying. Of course I couldn't produce it. In giving me the means of clearing myself—I'm sure he meant it for the best—Ralph forgot a very important fact."

"Forgot—what fact?"

"You," he said, looking her straight into the eyes. "If I had been bad enough to have that letter read in court, you would have been a disgraced woman for life. I don't think you would have had much chance of retaining the sympathy and respect of your friends on which you have been rather priding yourself."

She covered back from him, huddling into herself—one might almost have said she was shriveling up.

"And then there was another point," he continued. "Now that I come to think of it, I couldn't have been so muddled, after all, to have reasoned it all out so clearly. Why, that letter would have put you into the dock instead of me. It would probably have come under the head of conspiracy and incitement to a breach of the peace, or something they would have found an ugly name for. I couldn't very well let you run the risk of that, could I, Emily?"

His tone had become almost apologetic, as though he were not telling of an act of consummate self-sacrifice, but defending himself against some fresh trespass that had been laid to his charge. He had not watched her face as he spoke, he had not seen the changing emotions flitting across it, and the first intimation of the powerful upheaval that was taking place in her

came to him only when she suddenly sank upon her knees, and, covering her face with her hands, broke into a furious fit of sobbing. He started away as though in alarm, and then, approaching her, laid his hand gingerly on her shoulder.

"Why, Emily, what's the matter?"

"Oh, don't touch me—don't touch me. I'm a beast," she ejaculated brokenly.

"You're not—I won't have you calling yourself names," he said doggedly. "Anyway, whatever you are, you're good enough for me."

"Oh, Mark, Mark, say that again!" she implored him.

"I'll say it in a different way, if you don't mind. I'm one of the sort of fellows that can love only one woman in their life, whether she likes it or not."

"You mean whether she deserves it or not." And then, lifting her tear-stained face to his, she exclaimed pitifully: "But, oh, Mark; I'll try to deserve it—give me another chance, just once, for God's sake."

He stooped, caught her fiercely by her wrists, and pulled her to her feet.

"Emily, are you serious?" he cried hoarsely.

"Mark, are you?" she questioned in turn.

He stood silent, casting about for some way of assuring her effectively, when his eyes fell on the letter on the table. He snatched it up, and with a passionate gesture tore it into a hundred fragments.

"Now you are free to tell Eric what you like."

She shuddered, and, throwing herself into his arms, she whispered:

"Yes, come with me, and let me tell him at once."



MISS DEMOCRACY

By KATE JORDAN

The Ritz.
Piccadilly, London.
July —.

DEAR SISTER ALECIA: This is just to tell you that Sir George Rubbledale has proposed to Virginia! She came in only a moment ago, and told me in what might be called her "cool American fashion."

"Aunt Sue, I'm to be Lady Rubbledale," she said, and began to take the pins out of her big, rose-wreathed hat in the most leisurely fashion.

"How's that?" I couldn't help saying, although it's an American form of speech of which I do not approve; but I was so surprised I dropped the magazine I was reading and a box of chocolates.

"Sir George," smiled Virginia, "seems determined to have me 'love and honor' him all my days. He kindly agreed 'to chuck the obey overboard.' Such was his classical expression. I think I'll have a *sweet time!*" Virginia said, and there was a lovely look, Alecia, in her slate-blue eyes—she grows prettier every day. "Sir George is like a big, lumbering dog, awfully docile; but so strong, too. And *such* a nice nose! He's out in the hall."

I saw Sir George immediately. Like a true gentleman, he wanted to tell me at once, even apologized for not having spoken to me first, and said he was

about to write to *you*. How fortunate we all are!

I often think of you, Alecia, dear, in your sedate little house in a small American town. I am wondering now just how you will feel to know that your only daughter, not yet twenty, is soon to marry into such an old and noble family as Sir George's. I am sending you a Burke's Peerage. How glad I am I persuaded you to let me chaperon her! She's really done wonderfully. Not many girls "have made such hay" upon a first European jaunt.

I'll close now. I am so excited. I am to chaperon Virginia down to Sir George's home in Sussex—just we two and he. I'll write you from there.

Your delighted and affectionate
SUSAN.

Hawthorn Priory.
The Downs, Market Harbury.
July —.

MY EVER DEAR SISTER: Aren't the mere names of these English houses and places *delicious*? Don't they make you see the hedges white with hawthorn, the sheep-covered downs stretching away for miles, the old, gray house, with mullioned—I think they're called mullioned—windows, and the long, stone path, with arched openings where nuns or monks—at the moment I forget which—used to walk when it was either a monastery or a convent?

The old place now belongs to Sir

George, and is only one of several old houses here, all included in his estate. Virginia and I were counting them the other day; the great Hall, not opened at present; the Dower House, also closed; Rubbledale Grange, a fine old farm under an overseer; and this darling Priory where we are staying. Sir George has always thought this a cozy place for a bachelor. He will open the Hall after Virginia's marriage to him.

Virginia seems much interested in everything English. I say she *seems* so, for she is a strange girl and says strange things. During the week we've been here she has grown quite serious. One day we went coaching. Sir George was the whip, and he reined up on the top of a hill so we could see the view. Virginia stood on the box seat and looked all around the wonderful country; at the village, with the little thatched cottages—Sir George's tenants, dear—and at the gables and great towers of his estates.

I whispered to her, and I am sure it was with a happy smile: "No wonder you are admiring it all, Virginia!"

She turned a queer, slow gaze on me.
"I am thinking about it."

"Nice thoughts," I smiled. I felt she must be happy. Why, any girl would be, Apecia!

"If you knew all my thoughts, Aunt Sue, as I look over this place," she said, and still not a smile, "they would make your flesh crawl!"

Fortunately Sir George did not hear this most unusual remark, as he was busy examining the hoofs of one of the horses. I was going to ask her to explain, but there wasn't time. Presently we passed some haymakers, and they all curtsied. I was gratified, for I had never seen a man really pull a forelock before—but I saw Virginia grow red as if with anger. A little later we passed some barefoot children; they also curtsied, and turned handsprings, and Sir George flung them some coins, that they scrambled for furiously. Then I saw Virginia fairly shiver; and when I spoke to her later she did not answer. She seemed wrapped in most engrossing thoughts.

Alecia, I will confess to you that I wish the marriage were safely solemnized in the lovely old church with the lych gate. Virginia is *so* impulsive and determined. Sometimes when she puzzles me I get a *down* feeling that perhaps, after all, you and I won't ever have a chance to see how we might like living in the Dower House when she is Lady Rubbledale. It's an awful sensation—as if one were lying on one's back and couldn't turn over! I'm a little doleful this moment. My next letter will be longer.

Your devoted sister,
SUSAN.

The Priory.

July —.

MY DEAR ALECIA: Another week has gone by. I have not been well—very nervous. My circulation has become poor—sometimes I get numb to the knees, particularly when Virginia has uttered one of her strange remarks. I'll try to explain the situation to you, dear. Virginia is looking lovely. She is thinner, and it suits her. Her slate-blue eyes fairly glow at you, and her dimples seem to get deeper and more fascinating. So much for that! But mentally she is a *mystery*. Her strange points of view, her startling speeches—well, these may be the development that comes from travel. Now, I like development—but, my dear, within limits! To be perfectly frank, what Virginia calls her "intolerance of mildewed imposition" and her "resistance to the iron fist of Might giving Right an uppercut"—her words—are not at all what we considered fitting in a well-bred young lady when we were girls.

After the drive that I told you about, when she spoke so querely, I overheard some things she said to Sir George. I'll endeavor to give you an exact account of the little scene.

After dinner that night I had gone into the morning room, and had settled myself behind a screen for forty winks—I was simply exhausted after the day. Well, when I came to myself I heard voices. Then I knew that Virginia and Sir George were on the marble steps

just outside the window—or, rather, they were fairly sitting on the window ledge. I knew that the vast lawn before them, with just the ghostly sundial in the center, was drenched in moonlight.

It was just the place for lovers, and I was delighted. But of course if I made myself known the whole thing would become ridiculous, and most unfortunate. So I kept as still as a mouse, and tried not to listen. But after a bit, when, somehow, I realized they were not acting like an engaged couple, I admit I did listen. I felt it was a chance to understand Virginia better.

"If we *are* married in October," she was saying, in a very doubtful sort of voice, "will your tenants be invited to the church?"

"Some of them, and we'll dance with most of them afterward," said Sir George.

"Do they like you?" This, my dear, with an accent as if her nose were wrinkled up.

"Why—in fact, I never thought about it," he said, with a jolly laugh. And why should he?

"It doesn't matter to you?" Virginia demanded hotly.

"Oh, I dare say they like me well enough! But we weren't talking of them, you know—" Here, Alecia, from his tone, I judged that he endeavored some lover's attention.

"Oh, but I *am* talking of them!" I could tell she'd pulled pettishly away from him. I could have boxed her ears! "They interest me profoundly. Tell me, besides the bells ringing *for* us, and the tenants dancing *with* us, will any bonfires be blazing *in* our honor?"

"On every hill!" he cried, as enthusiastically as a boy.

"Bully!" she said, and I heard the swish of her skirts as she sprang up. "Then I'll tell you what I want you to do. I want the bonfires," she said, in a creepy, intense sort of voice, "made of those rabbit hutches in the village!"

"I don't know what you mean. Quite natural he shouldn't!"

"Those rabbit hutches," Virginia went on, "that you *call* houses, in which

your tenants are packed and stifling when its hot, or packed and drenched by the rain through broken roofs when it's wet. Oh," she said, and seemed half crying, although she stamped her foot, "why aren't you a big-minded, democratic landlord, as some in England are? How can you act as if this earth were made for *you* to be happy on? For *them* to suffer on? How can you be happy to see them just servile clods? These beings at your doors have *rights*. What you practice is mildewed imposition, and I abhor it. I want you, at my wedding, to burn those damp, thatched, rotting huts! Put these people in decent houses! Teach them to respect their individuality! Don't give me diamonds for a present! I won't take them! Give me these people as well-considered human beings—not as tenants—and then, oh, I'll really love you with every smallest bit of my heart, and better and better every day!"

I don't know how it ended. I sat there as cold as ice, my fingers in my ears. I couldn't listen further. I felt close to fainting. They moved off across the lawn at last, and I managed to get to my room, utterly miserable. Thinking it over, I believe some strain from your husband's cousin—that awful advanced person who thought nobody had a right to own land—has come down to her. But if I'd dreamed she was "Not like other girls," my dear, I'd not have suggested her leaving America at all. I've got to an age when I like usual, restful people about me. If my face keeps puckering up, as it's been doing this last week, I'll have some bills for massage, I can tell you.

The next afternoon. I kept this open on the chance of there being any important developments. Virginia has said nothing. Sir George has said nothing, but he looks thoughtful. However, I can see that he is fatuously in love with Virginia, so all is happy and peaceful at present.

I broke off as above because I saw Virginia starting off, alone, across the park. As she has on her walking skirt,

and carries a cane, and has one of the collies with her, I can see she is off for what she calls a "tramp"; and this, although Sir George has said that to go walking without Jiggins, her maid, is not *comme il faut*. Well, what next, I wonder? Your affectionate

SUSAN.

The Priory.

August —.

MY DEAR ALECIA: It is ten days fully since my last letter. You'll forgive me when you understand. I have been vexed and so upset. I am so sorry to have to tell you of an eccentricity of Virginia's that, to me, seems absolutely out of the province that a well-brought-up young woman is supposed to occupy. Virginia told me—oh, in the sweetest way, and smiling—that I ought to rest, as she will write you of her actions herself. But I prefer you, Alecia, to hear a sane, unbiased account of what has transpired.

What Virginia calls a "bright" idea occurred to her. I call it an atrociously independent one. When I think of our girlhood, and how if we were out ten minutes after dusk, even in a town and near home, we almost fainted—but there! Well, Virginia's bright idea was to offer a prize at the village school for the best composition on the subject: "What I Want To Be When I Am Grown Up."

The winners—two boys and two girls—were to have what they wanted up to two shillings' worth. You see, Virginia paid a number of visits to the village school, and I went with her once. The children looked so sweet, I thought. They rose and curtsied as we entered.

"Isn't it charming and respectful?" I demanded.

"I like to see *children* dip a curtsy," said Virginia, while her gaze measured the rows as keenly, my dear, as if she were a census taker; but she was deliciously pretty, nevertheless.

"Beautiful rose-white complexions," I murmured, "and manners that make our unruly, pushing American children seem by comparison a lot of little savages."

"Quite true, Aunt Sue," said Virginia, nodding with a dreamy smile. "The children at home *are* often badly trained. But what I want to know is this: What have these children besides complexions and manners? I mean to find out."

After this the offer about the compositions followed. I'll rest a few moments before continuing. This is going to be a trying letter.

Later, I had Jiggins give me a cup of hot clover tea—a country remedy here for nerves—and feel better. Well, about the compositions—I must be just, Alecia, and admit that the results of that contest were like flames on the oil of Virginia's democracy. The girls wanted to be either cook, housekeeper, lady's maid, owner of a public house, or mangler—a sort of laundress. Only one rose to the dressmaking heights. The boys, for the most part, wanted to be grooms or coachmen; the rest wanted to be carpenter, gardener, shoemaker, farrier—a sort of blacksmith.

I wish you could have seen Virginia's face. Possibly you can imagine it. Her scorn, for Sir George's sake, was quiet, but so large I could feel it filling the entire house and grounds. In regard to the prizes, she was chillingly decisive.

"I shall give—*none*. The papers are all hopeless; the mangler and the farrier being perhaps a little more sodden. But as I offered money, I shall, as a gift, let each one have whatever is desired for three shillings apiece."

Here was another unfortunate thing, Alecia. Virginia later brought me a list.

"Look!" she said. "They want all sorts of things—aprons, ties, kites, mufflers, tops, one a tin of herring, one a pound of garden seeds. Not one has asked for a book—not one!"

Sir George was in the room at this time. I could see he was not pleased. I suppose he is *not* what is called a good landlord—you see, he is one, without doubt, to whom the lower orders are not real—they exist for him, they don't live. He is not cruel, merely indifferent. After he left the room I chided Virginia for *bothering*.

"Is it my fault, Aunt Sue," she asked, with her sweetest smile, "that the atmosphere of this village makes brains like suet? For my single self I'd rather have *our* children's careless manners—and their electricity!"

What could I say? I lay down shortly after, hoping to lose myself for a few moments, but did not close my eyes. I am very nervous, very much afraid that my next letter will tell you the engagement is broken. Your faithful

SUSAN.

The Priory.
August —.

DEAR SISTER: The last culminating touch to the situation so rashly evolved by Virginia's rather trying democracy and development, my dear, came about a few days ago.

I was looking over the fashions in *The Queen* and *The Lady* in the pale-blue morning room quite restfully, for I thought Virginia was in her room having her hair washed by Jiggins, when a shadow fell across the window sill, and there stood Sir George. He was very pale and annoyed.

"Would you like," he asked, "to see and hear your really bewildering niece at her best, or worst, according to one's point of view?"

Fancy my feelings!

"What do you mean, Sir George?" I faltered, standing up.

"If you'll ring for your things, I'll order the pony cart and take you to the delectable spot," he said, in a queer, sneering voice.

"But, Sir George, Virginia is in her room—" I began.

"Virginia," he said quietly, "is on the village green, half a mile away. She is standing on the tail of a cart, and is telling a parcel of villagers just what she thinks of them."

I don't remember how I got to the spot, Alecia, but it was too terribly true. Virginia was standing at the end of a baker's small cart, speaking in a voice that, in its rise and fall, reminded me of Frederick Warde's when, long ago, he delivered *Mark Antony's* address over *Cæsar's* body. About one hundred vil-

lagers and a lot of the schoolchildren were staring up at her, open-mouthed.

Sir George pulled up in the shade of some trees, where we were witnesses, without being seen. We had arrived for what, Virginia told me afterward, was her "peroration."

"I once saw a mouse in a glass from which all air was shut out!" Virginia cried, and I had had no idea of the sonorously of which her voice was capable. "After the first few moments it settled down quite quietly, and let itself go. All life-giving air shut out from it, it was being stifled, it was dying—but it didn't know it. It died! Now you, men and women, who have no longings to give your children wider, better, fuller lives than you yourselves have had, are like that mouse! Your children are ossifying mentally without ambition. They have no glorious pangs of dissatisfaction with accepted conditions and traditions! Don't be afraid to see in your children the pangs of dissatisfaction, my friends! Such pangs are growing pains, and spell Hope, Achievement, Liberty, and Life.

"I have told you of the Penny Reading Room and Library I shall open here later. I shall expect every man and woman who can read, but particularly every boy and girl, to take one book every fortnight from that library. From that time on I shall have evening talks, during which you shall all tell me what you have been reading and how it has impressed you. Shake off your dull, dead calm! Think! Feel! Don't tell your boy to be satisfied shoeing horses because *you've* shod them! If he can't do anything better, then let him shoe them all his life, and to the best of his ability—but give him his chance to find out!"

My dear Alecia, I have written this from memory. I did not wait to see the extraordinary meeting break up. I begged Sir George to take me home, and he did. Jiggins gave me some valerian. I had my dinner, early, in my room—a chop merely, and a bit of milky pudding.

Virginia came promptly, inquiring for me, but I had told Jiggins to admit

no one. At about nine o'clock I sent for Virginia. I shall report the conversation exactly as it occurred.

She came in, most concerned and sweet, but I held her off. She wore the white marquisette with the hand-painted forget-me-nots, and looked so feminine it was hard to imagine her *as she was*.

"Do not kiss me," I said, "You are causing me the deepest anxiety."

"I'm so sorry, Aunt Sue!" she exclaimed. "Oh, isn't it dreadful that what seems so right to me should be the means of hurting those I love?"

"What was the meaning of this afternoon's exhibition?" I demanded sharply.

"I was trying to be of some use in the world, Aunt Sue."

"In what way, pray?"

"By talking to these bovine people, by trying to open their eyes to—life. Their bobbing and pulling of forelocks to a man who is using them badly——"

"Are you speaking of Sir George?" I demanded.

"I am. He fails in his duty."

"And you take a very unladylike way of showing it to him, let me tell you."

"Was it?" she asked sweetly. "I thought it very English."

"What does that remark mean?"

"I've always read that English ladies take such an interest in tenants and politics, and all sorts of things; and somebody always talks from the tail of a cart."

She said this with such an innocent smile I could have shaken her.

"Men talk from carts," I said furiously; "the aspirant for Parliament and his supporters—not women—certainly not unmarried girls."

"Oh, then I made a mistake," said Virginia. "I got 'the tail of the cart' frightfully mixed up, you see. I'm sorry."

She makes correction difficult. With her sad, little pout and long lashes she looked very childish.

"Well," I groaned, "this finishes you with Sir George. He will, of course, break the engagement. He couldn't continue it, naturally. I wouldn't expect it of him."

Virginia looked ruminative.

"Oh," she said, with a broken sigh, "is it going to end like that?"

"What other way? Of course you've ruined your chances. Sir George considers himself lucky to have discovered that he was engaged to a sort of *anarchist* in time," I said, on the point of hysteria.

Virginia still stood pensively.

"I wonder," she murmured. "I haven't seen Sir George yet, as he wasn't here for dinner, but will be back at nine. I'll tell you what to do, Aunt Sue," she continued. "You be in the morning room, where you were the other time." This was a shock. I didn't suppose she knew a thing about my being behind the screen. "And in that way you can hear for yourself just what passes."

"I don't care to play eavesdropper," I said. "Besides, it will be very humiliating to me to hear a splendid gentleman tell you that it would be impossible to marry you."

"All the more reason for being on hand," said Virginia sadly. "I may need you. Suppose I should faint?"

Well, I was there, Alecia. I couldn't keep away. They strolled up in the moonlight from somewhere, and sat on the steps.

"It makes a chap look such a duffer, don't you know," Sir George was saying impatiently. "That sort of thing is all right for suffragettes in the east end of London, but for my wife——"

"It need never happen again," said Virginia, in her very sweetest voice, "if you'll only help me, now that I've shown you how unjust——"

"But look here," Sir George cried, "you can't come over here and upset our British traditions and—and—all that sort of thing, you know!"

"But some of them should be upset," said Virginia, "because they are so hideous. Won't you please, dear, kick over the horrid ones—for me?"

"No!" he snapped. "I don't intend to be ridiculous—and American!"

After that remark, Alecia, the silence was thick. Virginia spoke at last.

"You don't see what I'm handing you."

"Eh?" he asked sharply.

"Your ring, Sir George."

"Ring? What in thunder—what do you mean?"

Virginia stood up. I heard the swish of her skirts.

"Put it on an *English* finger—some mild, sweet, lovely girl who has been brought up to look down. I haven't."

"But I don't want an English finger. I want yours, darling." He was almost crying. "Oh, I love you so! You won't chuck me this way?"

"We look at the world with different eyes." I never knew, Alecia, that the child could throw such feeling into her voice. It reminded me of Clara Morris in "Miss Multon" in the old days. "We would be so miserable. Better for me to marry some one quite as—as ridiculous—and American"—she gave a little sob—"as myself."

"You shan't!" cried Sir George. I know he put his arms around her because Virginia gave a queer sort of gurgle, as if she were choking. "You're mine, and I'm going to marry you if I have to send every yokel in the village to Oxford to do it. Now"—I could hear a kiss, *several*—"just what do you want me to do?"

"You'll do it?"

"Anything!"

"You delicious dear!" sighed Vir-

ginia. "Your education shall begin tomorrow. How long will it be, I wonder, before I feel sure of you?"

"What do you mean by that?" he asked, in fear.

"Where's my ring?" Virginia asked.

"Put it on, please—I feel cold without it. Now listen. During the next three months, George, dear, you shall learn to be ridiculous, and I know you'll grow to like it. When we realize that we are both utterly silly—from your present point of view—we'll get married."

When I saw Virginia later she was in her nightgown, and Jiggins was brushing her hair. She twinkled at me as she laughed.

"You see, Aunt Sue, I did not faint, and did not need you, but it was so sweet of you to be there, just the same."

So it rests, I have been sorely worried, but now I feel hopeful.

Faithfully,
SUSAN.

P.S.—Just a line before posting this. Virginia is fairly "running" things at the Priory now. Sir George is as tame as a flannel rabbit. Yesterday in the summerhouse he sat quite still for hours, while Virginia read aloud from a book called "Triumphant Democracy."

Ah, Alecia, how much a man will forgive a woman if he loves her; and if he doesn't, how little! Good-by.

THE RETURNING

I SAID I will go back again where we
Were glad together. But, my dear, my dear,
Where are the roses we were wont to see
The songs we used to hear?

I said the hearth flame that once burned for us
I will renew with all the cheer of old,
Yet here within the circle luminous
Our very hearts are cold.

That was a barren garden that we found,
This was an empty house we came to meet,
We, who for all our longing hear no sound
Of Love's returning feet.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

ADVENTURINGS *the* PSYCHICAL



X.—THE MAN OF GENIUS

THE appearance from time to time of exceptional individuals who, by their superlative achievements in some one of the many fields of human endeavor, win for themselves lasting renown and are acclaimed as "men of genius," presents a problem that has lately given rise to considerable, and sometimes heated, discussion.

Until perhaps fifty years ago, the habit was to take men of genius as granted. People admired them, applauded them, wondered at them, but scarcely ever sought to explain them. The growth of the sciences of biology, physiology, and psychology, and, above all, the formulation of the doctrine of evolution by Darwin and Wallace, led to a more inquiring attitude. For practically the first time the attempt was made to ascertain the nature of genius, and to determine whether it is something beyond human control, or can be cultivated and developed so as to be made a more frequent phenomenon.

As yet, it must be admitted, there is no general agreement with respect to the answers to be returned to these important questions. Indeed, there has actually grown up a school of thinkers who, by implication, at any rate, would condemn genius as aberrant and undesirable, calling for repression rather than cultivation. Following the lead of Moreau, of Tours, and Cesare Lombroso, these philosophers describe

genius as a kind of insanity, and classify men of genius not only with the insane, but with criminals and other degenerate types.

In the main, this conclusion is reached by the unpleasant process of scouring through the biographies of great men, and the contemporary tittle-tattle about them, for evidence of eccentricities of conduct. Such evidence, quite naturally, is not hard to find. As the old Quaker used to say: "Everybody's queer but thee and me—and thee's a little queer." There has never lived a man who, judged according to the strained standards so often applied by investigators of the Moreau-Lombroso school, could hope to escape the imputation of lunacy and degeneracy.

This is not denying that there have been many men of genius who acted more or less like lunatics all their lives, gave themselves furiously to excesses of all sorts, or were at times victims of sundry severe diseases of the nervous system.

There can be no doubt, for instance, that the mighty Napoleon was an abnormal being, who suffered from attacks of hystero-epilepsy, as did Mahomet, Swedenborg, Cæsar, Peter the Great, Richelieu, Molière, Handel, and numerous other historic figures of outstanding distinction. The excesses of Poe, Byron, Burns, De Quincey, and too many other great writers, are as notorious as their works are famous.

Yet, when one ranges with a candid mind through the entire list of those to whom the term "man of genius" may reasonably be applied, nothing would seem more certain than that the great majority, like the great majority of men of all sorts and conditions, have been sane and sensible enough.

As Charles Lamb so well said: "It is impossible to conceive of a mad Shakespeare." Was Dante mad? Or Milton, or Goethe, or Schiller? Can insanity and degeneration be attributed to Newton or Darwin, to Pitt or Gladstone, to Emerson or Carlyle, to Washington or Hamilton, to Webster or Clay, to Grant or Lee? If so, then we are all insane and degenerate. The truth is that insanity may be an accident in the life of any man of genius, just as it may be an accident in the life of any ordinary man. But it is incredible and demonstrably false to assume that it is the universal and inevitable characteristic of genius.

Bear in mind that it is through the inspirations, the labors, the achievements of genius that mankind has been chiefly aided in its progress from barbarism to civilization. Somebody—Carlyle, if I remember rightly—once declared that the history of any people may be summed up in the biographies of a few of its eminent men.

Whatever of exaggeration there may be in this statement, it is certain that in the long run the human element is the controlling factor in determining the destinies of a nation. It is no mere chance coincidence that the great nations of ancient and modern times have been the nations most liberally endowed with great men. Instead, therefore, of locking up our men of genius in lunatic asylums, the policy should be to encourage and reward them—nay, even, if possible, to multiply them.

But can this be done? Is there any means whereby conditions can be created tending to the development of men of genius, in some such manner as, for example, an expert gardener develops plants and flowers of unusual beauty? Personally, I have not the slightest doubt that to no inconsiderable extent

such an achievement is actually feasible; and that, as a result of recent psychological discoveries, we are now in possession of certain facts indicating how we might hopefully proceed in the attempt to effect it.

Most important in this respect is a discovery to which reference has frequently been made in the preceding article—the discovery of the subconscious. Thanks to the investigations of the psychical researchers and psycho-pathologists, whose labors have been described, it is now known that, in addition to the ordinary stream of conscious thought, there coexists in all of us a submerged stream in which mental processes of the most varied nature are carried on without our conscious effort or direction, but often to our great profit.

Usually we remain in utter ignorance of these hidden processes—these activities of our larger self—unless they chance to be revealed to us in some striking, perhaps sensational, fashion, in the way of dreams, crystal visions, and the like. But by experiment their presence and their usefulness may always be readily demonstrated.

Manifestly, the more habitually and freely one could draw upon the resources of this subconscious region of his being, the more he would be able to accomplish consciously, and the more intelligent, capable, and gifted he would become. Quite conceivably this it is that distinguishes the man of genius from his fellows; and that, in fine, makes him a man of genius. Or, to put it more elaborately, in the words of Frederic Myers, the brilliant psychical researcher to whom belongs the credit of having been the first to apprehend this possible solution of the problem of genius:

"I would suggest that genius—if that vaguely used word is to receive anything like a psychological definition—should be regarded as a power of utilizing a wider range than other men can utilize of faculties in some degree innate in all—a power of appropriating the results of subliminal mentation to subserve the supraliminal stream of

thought, so that an 'inspiration of genius' will be, in truth, a subliminal uprush, an emergence into the current of ideas which the man is consciously manipulating of other ideas which he has not consciously originated, but which have shaped themselves beyond his will in profounder regions of his being. I would urge that there is here no real departure from normality; no abnormality, at least, in the sense of degeneration; but rather a fulfillment of the true norm of man."

Advanced tentatively and hesitatingly, in a work devoted primarily not to a study of genius, but to an attempt to vindicate on a scientific basis the doctrine of immortality, Myers' hypothesis has received scant attention; it has been completely overshadowed by the pessimistic and pernicious doctrines of the Lombrosians. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that it embodies the true theory of genius; and, still further, though Myers himself does not seem to have anticipated this, that it provides a starting point for the task of making geniuses to order, so to speak.

It is only necessary to read the statements of those men of genius who have left autobiographical accounts in order to satisfy oneself of the tremendous debt they owe to their subconscious. There is too marked a resemblance between the manner in which they arrive at their brilliant results and the manner in which we have already found the subconscious operating to a lesser degree under normal and abnormal conditions to leave any doubt on that point.

As will be remembered, our survey of the phenomena of subconscious mentality has shown that what frequently occurs is the sudden flashing forth of latent ideas in the form sometimes of mere thoughts, sometimes of trance utterances, sometimes of complicated dreams or of sensory hallucinations of one kind or another.

Often these subliminal uprushes, as Frederic Myers so aptly called them, represent only forgotten memories or unnoticed perceptions, as in many of the illustrative cases cited in the articles on apparitions, crystal gazing, automatic

speaking and writing, and subconscious phenomena in general; but also they are often indicative of original thinking of a high order, as when a knotty problem, defying solution by conscious effort, is quickly solved in sleep.

Some of my readers may recall the extraordinary case of Professor Hilprecht, who obtained through a dream the explanation of a hieroglyphic inscription that had baffled him for weeks.

All such self-evident manifestations of subconscious activity—which, as was said, ordinarily occur only at irregular and infrequent intervals—are paralleled most strikingly, and to an unusual degree, in the case of men of genius. There is even one type of genius—although by no means the most valuable—in which, within a certain limited field, the subconscious is perpetually in evidence, and perpetually responsive to the demands of the upper consciousness. I refer to the so-called "lightning calculators," those prodigies whose mathematical feats, performed without the aid of pencil and paper, have been a source of unending wonder to the world, and have, at times, been so remarkable as to be well-nigh incredible.

Thus, Zerah Colburn, an American lightning calculator, when only six years old, unable to read, and ignorant of the name and value of any numeral set down on paper, is known to have stated correctly the number of seconds in a period as long as two thousand years, and to have returned the correct answer (9,130,200) to the question: "Supposing I have a cornfield, in which are 7 acres, having 17 rows to each acre, 64 hills to each row, 8 ears on a hill, and 150 kernels on the ear, how many kernels in the cornfield?"

A little later, having been taken by his father to England, it is recorded that, in the presence of a number of witnesses:

"He undertook and succeeded in raising the number 8 to the sixteenth power, 281,474,976,780,656. He was then tried as to other numbers, consisting of one figure, all of which he raised as high as the tenth power, with so much facility that the person appointed to take down

the results was obliged to enjoin him not to be too rapid. With respect to numbers of two figures, he would raise some of them to the sixth, seventh, and eighth power, but not always with equal facility; for the larger the products became the more difficult he found it to proceed. He was asked the square root of 106,929, and before the number could be written down he immediately answered 327. He was then requested to name the cube root of 268,336,125, and with equal facility and promptness he replied 645."

Vito Mangiamèle, the son of an illiterate Sicilian shepherd, was able to extract the cube root of 3,796,416 in half a minute. The question was put to him: "What number satisfies the condition that its cube plus five times its square is equal to 42 times itself plus 40?" In less than a minute Vito correctly replied that 5 satisfied this condition.

Zacharias Dase, another calculating marvel, was especially famed for the ease with which he could mentally multiply and divide large sums. He was given the numbers 79,532,853 and 93,758,479 to be multiplied, and returned the correct answer in fifty-two seconds. He multiplied mentally two numbers each of twenty figures in six minutes, and extracted the square root of a number of one hundred figures in fifty-two minutes.

Carl Gauss, the genius to whom we owe the modern theory of numbers; André Ampère, discoverer of fundamental truths of electro-dynamics; Jedediah Buxton, Truman Safford, Jacques Inaudi, George Bidder, and his son, George Bidder, Junior, were other ready reckoners of whom most interesting stories are told. In most of them the gift appeared early in life, sometimes in infancy. What was probably Gauss' first demonstration of his unusual mathematical ability was given when he was only three years old, and under extraordinary circumstances, as related by Professor E. W. Scripture:

"His father was accustomed to pay his workmen at the end of the week, and to add on the pay for overtime, which

was reckoned by the hour at a price in proportion to the daily wages. After the master had finished his calculations and was about to pay out the money, the boy, scarce three years old, who had followed unnoticed the acts of his father, raised himself and called out in his childish voice: 'Father, the reckoning is wrong, it makes so much,' naming a certain number. The calculation was repeated with great attention, and to the astonishment of all it was found to be exactly as the little fellow had said."

Professor Scripture further tells us:

"At the age of nine, Gauss entered the reckoning class of the town school. The teacher gave out an arithmetical series to be added. The words were scarcely spoken when Gauss threw his slate on the table, as was the custom, exclaiming: 'There it lies!' The other scholars continue their figuring, while the master throws a pitying look on the youngest of them. At the end of the hour the slates were examined; Gauss' had only one number on it, the correct result alone."

These anecdotes, it seems to me, hint strongly at the distinctly subconscious nature of the calculating processes involved in such cases. But, indeed, direct testimony on this point is forthcoming from some of the prodigies themselves. The elder Bidder, in a paper contributed to a scientific journal, declares that: 'Whenever I feel called upon to make use of the stores of my mind they seem to rise with the rapidity of lightning.'

In a later issue of the same journal, it is asserted regarding him:

"He had an almost miraculous power of seeing, as it were, intuitively what factors would divide any large number, not a prime. Thus, if he were given the number 17,861, he would instantly remark that it was 327×53 . He could not, he said, explain how he did this; it seemed a natural instinct with him."

Another expert calculator, an English civil engineer named Blyth, says in a letter:

"I am conscious of an intuitive recognition of the relations of figures. For instance, in reading statements of figures in newspapers, which are often cgregi-

ously wrong, it seems to come to me intuitively that something is wrong, and when that occurs I am usually right."

In the case of at least one lightning calculator there is proof positive of the concurrent operation of two trains of thought, the one conscious, the other subconscious. This is Jedediah Buxton, who "would talk freely while doing his questions, that being no molestation or hindrance to him."

Moreover, all, or nearly all, of these calculators seem to have prodigious powers of memory. Of Dase it is recorded that "after spending half an hour on fresh questions, if asked to repeat the figures he began with, he would go over the whole correctly." This of itself is evidence of unusual access to the subconscious, since it is in the subconscious that memories are stored.

Most impressive of all, however, is the rapid, often instantaneous, emergence of the answers to the problems propounded by those testing the calculator's powers. It is as though the mere putting of the problem, and the mere desire to solve it, were enough to set in motion a "thinking machine" that automatically brought about the desired result. It is significant that in most cases the calculators themselves are unable to give any satisfactory account of the methods they employ, and sometimes frankly admit that they "do not know how the answers come."

Now, this sudden irruption of ideas, this dazzling solution of problems, is characteristic not only of calculating prodigies, but also of all men of genius. They may not have—in truth, they have comparatively seldom—such a spectacular resort to the subconscious; but they assuredly have it in an astonishing measure, and to better purpose. Precisely as we find the answers to mathematical puzzles rising spontaneously in the minds of ready reckoners, so, time and again, do we find great thoughts, amounting it may be to epoch-making conceptions, forcing themselves upon men of genius, frequently at moments when they are consciously thinking of some other matter, or are not consciously exercising their minds at all.

To mention only a few of the many instances that might be cited, the important invention of the pendulum is directly traceable to a subliminal uprush in the mind of Galileo, who, while idly watching the vibrations of the great bronze lamp swinging from the roof of the cathedral of Pisa, had the possibility of the pendulum unexpectedly thrust upon him by noticing that, whatever the range of the lamp's oscillations, they were invariably executed in equal time. A subliminal uprush in Newton's mind, occasioned, it is said, by the sight of a falling apple, gave rise to the great conception of the law of gravitation. Alfred Russel Wallace's discovery of the scientific doctrine of the origin of species flashed upon him, to use his own words, in a few moments of desultory reflection while lying ill in bed.

In like manner, Montesquieu, during a carriage ride, had born in his mind the plan of his master work, the "*Esprit des Lois*," which has had such a profound influence on the development of political theory throughout the civilized world. The motif of Mozart's "*Zauberflöte*" came to him while playing a game of billiards with some friends in Prague. Of Mozart, also, it is told that when he once sent his sister a fugue with a prelude, he excused himself for having written the prelude after the fugue. "The truth is," said he, "it was while I was writing down the fugue that I composed the prelude."

Many men of genius have themselves recognized and conceded their debt to the subconscious, describing their inspiration as "a sweet and seductive fever, during which their thought has become rapidly and involuntarily fruitful, and has burst forth like the flame of a lighted torch." Napoleon used to say that the fate of battles was the result of an instant, of a latent thought. "The decisive moment appeared; the spark burst forth, and one was victorious." Lamartine said: "It is not I who think, but my ideas which think for me." Hoffman often told his friends: "When I compose, I sit down to the piano, shut my eyes, and play what I hear." De Musset writes:

"One does not work, one listens; it is as though a stranger were speaking into one's ear." Voltaire, on seeing one of his tragedies performed, exclaimed: "Was it really I who wrote that?"

Schiller, writing to Körner, declared:

"It is not well in works of creation that reason should too closely challenge the ideas that come thronging to the doors. Taken by itself, an idea may be highly unsuitable, even venturesome, and yet in conjunction with others, themselves equally absurd alone, it may furnish a suitable link in the chain of thought. Reason cannot see this, unless it carefully considers the idea in its connections. In a creative brain reason has withdrawn her watch at the doors, and ideas crowd in pell-mell."

Even in sleep the subconscious may continue to be of great service to the man of genius. I have mentioned in an earlier article the interesting fact that Robert Louis Stevenson obtained the plots for many of his stories in dreams, during which, as he said, he seemed to be a spectator in a theater, watching the development of a play and wondering what was coming next. The same sensation, during periods of waking composition, is noted by other great writers—such as Charles Dickens and George Sand—occasionally with the added sensation of hearing the characters speak.

The problem, of course, remains, whether such unusual and more or less habitual utilization of the powers of the subconscious is a faculty at all susceptible of cultivation in the case of the ordinary man, so that he, too, may become a man of genius, or may, at all events, approximate more closely to the man of genius. I have already stated that there is reason for thinking that such a desirable consummation may actually be brought about.

For one thing, it is obvious that the faculty of unusual access to his subconsciousness would profit the man of genius little if he did not possess an exceptionally rich subconsciousness. The spiritistic medium, as we have seen, is able in the trance state to draw upon the contents of her subconsciousness far more freely than even the man of

genius; but the results in the two cases are very different, and can be attributed only to a radical difference between the submerged mental states of the medium on the one hand and the man of genius on the other.

This difference, in turn, while no doubt partially due to the—in my opinion usually overestimated—fluence of heredity, is more directly traceable to a dissimilarity in the upbringing of the medium and the man of genius. The latter, in many cases from childhood, has been filling the secret chambers of his mind with facts and ideas lending themselves readily to later emergence from the depths of his subconscious in the form of lofty and original conceptions in science, literature, art, music, or whatever the field in which his genius becomes manifest. It must always be remembered that, great as is the dynamic creative power of the subconscious, it requires material to work with, and this material cannot be fully had without the exercise of conscious effort.

All men of genius have been great workers. Some persons may be inclined to dispute this statement, calling attention to the fact that the lives of many men of genius are marked by prolonged periods of inactivity, during which they produce nothing, but indulge in an ostentatious idleness. Yet it is to be observed that they invariably make amends later by an excessive industry, and that, even when apparently most indolent, they often are engaged in thinking out some problem, planning some master work.

Such instances, in truth, are only seeming exceptions to the general rule—which is, that men of genius are conspicuous for their absorption in their special pursuits, and for a constant striving after perfection. Usually, too, this trait is noticeable in them in early youth, often in childhood.

Take the case of Stevenson, the novelist so obviously indebted to his subconscious for the tales that have delighted hundreds of thousands of readers. Never was there a man who worked more diligently and deliberately

to attain success as an author; and this even while he was a student in college, where most of those who knew him thought that his chief occupation was "killing time." As he himself tells us:

"All through my boyhood and youth I was known and pointed out for the pattern of an idler; and yet I was always busy on my own private end, which was to learn to write. I kept always two books in my pocket, one to read, one to write in. As I walked, my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words. When I sat by the roadside, I would either read, or a pencil and a penny version book would be in my hand, to write down the features of the scene or commemorate some halting stanzas.

"Thus I lived with words. And what I thus wrote was for no ulterior use; it was written consciously for practice. It was not so much that I wished to be an author—though I wished that, too—as that I had vowed that I would learn to write. That was a proficiency that tempted me; and I practiced to acquire it, as men learn to whittle, in a wager with myself. . . . I worked in other ways, also; often accompanied my walks with dramatic dialogues, in which I played many parts; and often exercised myself in writing down conversations from memory.

"This was all excellent, no doubt; so were the diaries I sometimes tried to keep, but always and very speedily discarded, finding them a school of posturing and melancholy self-deception. And yet this was not the most efficient part of my training. Good though it was, it only taught me—so far as I have learned them at all—the lower and less intellectual elements of the art, the choice of the essential note and the right word; things that to a happier constitution had perhaps come by nature. And regarded as training, it had one grave defect; for it set me no standard of achievement.

"So that there was, perhaps, more profit, as there was certainly more effort, in my secret labors at home. Whenever I read a book or a passage that particularly pleased me, in which

a thing was said or an effect rendered with propriety, in which there was either some conspicuous force or some happy distinction in the style, I must sit down at once and set myself to ape that quality. I was unsuccessful, and I knew it; and tried again, and was again unsuccessful, and always unsuccessful; but at least in these vain bouts I got some practice in rhythm, in harmony, in construction, and the coördination of parts."

Sheridan, the famous orator, dramatist, and wit, similarly exemplifies the laborious industry of the man of genius. When the world gave him credit for being asleep, he would be sitting up in bed, early in the morning, diligently studying; and thereby, without being aware of it, providing his subconsciousness with material for future use, and training it to respond more fully to the demands of the upper consciousness.

Balzac, the greatest novelist that France has ever produced, was accustomed to wander for days among the people, inquiring into their habits, manners, motives, and ways of thinking; and would travel a hundred miles to get the material for a few lines of description. The result, when his genius began to show itself, after a long and painful period of incubation, was the creation of a series of works that will be read and reread as long as books are printed.

Napoleon's mind, almost from infancy, was occupied with problems of military strategy. He was incessantly thinking of his campaigns. Even at the opera he would set himself problems in warfare. "I have ten thousand men at Strasbourg, fifteen thousand at Magdeburg, twenty thousand at Wurzburg. By what stages must they march so as to arrive at Ratisbon on three successive days?"

Leonardo da Vinci was so intent on perfecting himself as a painter that he is said to have walked the whole length of Milan in order to alter one tint in his wonderful picture, "The Last Supper."

Even Sir Isaac Newton, who is rated by some as the greatest genius of all

times and all countries, was unremitting in his devotion to study, and passed his days in tireless observation of natural phenomena and in the working out of mechanical and mathematical problems.

Absorption in their work, in fact, is often carried to such extremes as to make men of genius strangely oblivious to what is going on around them. Many amusing stories are told illustrative of this tendency to "absent-mindedness." According to Sir David Brewster, when Newton left a room to get anything, he usually returned without it.

The physicist Rouelle was notoriously absent-minded. One day, while performing a laboratory experiment, he said to his students:

"You see, gentlemen, this caldron over the flame? Well, if I were to cease stirring it, an explosion would at once occur that would make us all jump."

As he spoke, he involuntarily ceased stirring, and his prediction was fulfilled. The explosion took place with a frightful noise, every window in the laboratory was broken, and Rouelle's audience fled wildly outside.

It is related of a gifted ecclesiastic, Bishop Münster, that, returning home and finding his door placarded with the announcement: "The master of the house is out," he calmly remained in front of the door, awaiting his own return.

Buxton, the mathematical prodigy, during a visit to London was taken to see Garrick in "King Richard III."

Afterward, being asked how he liked the play, he said that he really did not know what it had been about, as he had been too busy counting the words spoken by the different actors, and the number of times each went in and out.

Ampère, in a moment of preoccupation, penciled a problem on the back of a cab standing in the street, and was vastly astonished when the starting of the cab caused his problem to disappear. Lombroso says that much the same thing happened to Gioia, who, in the excitement of composition, wrote a chapter on the top of his bureau instead of on paper.

Absent-mindedness, however, is not an inevitable trait of genius. But devotion to the special interest most decidedly is. So true is this that it is possible to draw up the following psychological formula:

The achievements of a man of genius depend primarily on the extent to which resort is had to the resources of the subconscious, and this, for its part, depends primarily on the extent to which the activities of the subconscious are stimulated by conscious thought and effort.

It would seem to follow that every child, unless coming into the world with a congenital brain defect, is a potential man of genius, and may, by proper training, be developed into an actual man of genius. Just how, in my opinion, one should proceed in the endeavor to effect this result I shall try to make clear next month.



THE SUCCOR

WHEN I'm harried, hedged about
By gloomy dogma and by doubt,
What is the page whereto I turn
To put these wry-faced ones to rout?

Not to some sage, in parchment dressed,
Who, be it said, has only guessed,
But to that fragrant-lettered scroll—
To Nature's flowery palimpsest!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



The FLIGHT of BEATRICE

By Elliott Flower



JOHNSON, of Campo, told Alphabet Applegate and me the story of the Mexican raid. He also told us many other thrilling stories, but there are reasons why we always remembered this the most distinctly.

Johnson probably had a given name; but he was simply Johnson, of Campo, to everybody in that region. It was quite impossible to think of Johnson without Campo or of Campo without Johnson. He was the proprietor of the only store, a rough stone structure that had once been a fort and now served as safe-deposit vault and bank as well as a store.

His story of the raid was thrilling. A band of Mexican outlaws had come up over the line from Lower California to "rush" the town and rob the store. They had evidently hoped to make their attack so unexpectedly that they would be in possession before any one realized what was happening, but they were just a few minutes late. Some warning had preceded them, and the store was garrisoned by a few men when they arrived, while others were flocking to it from all directions. The outlaws promptly abandoned the attack on the store, but they showed their displeasure by "shooting up the town" after the manner of their kind. They rode through it once, and then back again, blazing away at everybody in sight, and with everybody shooting at them.

Strangely enough, in view of the fact that the town had had such scant warning, the outlaws suffered the most se-

verely, and, when they finally drew off, they were followed, and there was a running fight to the boundary.

Johnson told the story with a wealth of detail, mentioning the principal participants by name, and showing us the various points of interest; where Sim Nelson was shot as he crossed the road, where Jack Barger dropped behind a rock with a shattered arm and still picked off two of the raiders, where the bullets had splattered against the store, where the little frame hotel had been punctured, where some women and children had taken refuge, and so on. We were thrilled by the recital.

"My word!" exclaimed Applegate. "That must have been a ripping old fight. Did you get hurt at all?"

"Me!" returned Johnson, in surprise. "Why, that was before my time. I've only been here ten years."

Then came Beatrice, and we forgot Johnson and his stories. Applegate was interested the moment he saw her tripping across the road from the post office. He was more interested when she invaded the store and gossiped a little with Johnson while making some modest purchases. She was plainly American, but there were little touches of Mexican finery about her that showed the effect of association. As a matter of fact, Campo, although American itself, dealt principally with Mexicans, and naturally saw much of them.

"Who is she, old chap?" asked Applegate when Johnson rejoined us.

"Oh, that's Beatrice, the postmistress," answered Johnson.

"D'y know," remarked Applegate, "I rawther think I'll have to go over and awsk if there's any mail."

"Look out for Ben!" cautioned Johnson, in a tone that left me in doubt as to whether he was serious or not.

"Who's Ben?" inquired Applegate.

"He's a young rancher who don't like to have other men too much with Beatrice," explained Johnson.

"My word, old chap, cawn't a fellow get a chawnce-to speak to a girl in this country?" exclaimed Applegate disgustedly. "I'm always being warned to keep away, don't you know! There was a bally brute at Red Rock that made a silly awss of himself that way."

"Oh, Ben ain't unreasonable if you don't go too far," returned Johnson; "and she'd be careful of that. The Mexicans are a lot worse than way. I have to make 'em shed their guns when they come up here for a dance, or the coroner would have to camp here."

"For a dance?" repeated Applegate inquiringly.

"Sure," said Johnson. "We have 'em in the hall over the store every now and then. They're mostly Mexican; but white folks come, too, from all about here. There's one on to-night. Come over if you want to meet Beatrice. Ben won't kick on a stranger having two or three dances, if he has three or four."

"D'y know," remarked Applegate, "I rawther think this Ben chap is the right sort."

"Yes," returned Johnson dryly, "she thinks so, too, although they've had some quar'ls—never nothing to amount to much, of course, but what you might call spats now and then. But the Mexican can ain't reasonable; don't forget that!"

"Very odd!" commented Applegate. "I don't want to steal anybody's girl, you know; but this Ben chap is the only fellow I've heard of in this bally country that doesn't think you're awfster his girl if you just happen to smile at her. Tell him, Johnson, that I wouldn't run away with his girl if I could, and I don't fawncy I could. I'd be a silly awss to be running off with the girl of every chap I meet, now, wouldn't I?"

"You would," said Johnson decidedly, "especially in this case."

Unfortunately, as the sequel shows, Applegate was a very poor prophet of what he would do in the right circumstances.

However, we attended the dance that evening as Johnson's guests. Johnson was busy when we arrived at his store, and we then had opportunity to learn what he meant when he spoke of making the Mexicans shed their guns. He was selling tickets for the dance. No one could enter the hall above without a ticket, no one could get a ticket except from him, and no one could get a ticket at all without surrendering whatever weapon or weapons he might have. Moreover, as I afterward discovered, the weapons usually were not returned until the owners were ready to leave for home, which might not be until the following day.

"Have to do it," Johnson explained later. "Had a few fights, and there didn't seem any other way to stop that sort of thing. They get all lit up sometimes, and a Mexican's no man to have a knife or a gun on him when he's drinking; and there's girls that may smile at the wrong man. No, they don't get the liquor here—there ain't any sold in Campo—but they bring along a lot of that Mexican stuff that sets a man crazy. And a man that's had words with anybody don't get his gun back till he's had time to cool off."

Johnson, while talking, had been putting away his cash and arranging the arsenal of which he was temporary custodian, and had now completed his task.

"We'll go upstairs," he announced, "and I'll get you started right. Then I got to come back. Can't leave the store long on a dance night. Funny thing," he went on, as he led the way to the outside stairway that communicated with the dance hall; "but Beatrice didn't go down the road to meet Ben to-day, like she mostly does when he's coming over; and I ain't seen him near the post office since he got here. Wonder if there's anything wrong."

Neither Applegate nor I could fur-

nish any information on this subject, so we did not try.

Johnson paused a moment on the landing, just outside the hall.

"Going out with the San Diego stage in the morning?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered, and Applegate nodded acquiescence.

"Better not stay long here, then," advised Johnson. "You'll have to have breakfast at five."

We entered, and I had another of those surprises that Applegate was always giving me. When Johnson undertook to introduce us to Miss Barson, whose other name was Beatrice, she interrupted him with a laugh, and informed him she had already met Mr. Applegate, in proof of which she shook hands with him warmly.

"Yes," said Applegate, "I thought there might be some mail for me, you know."

I knew then where Applegate had been for about an hour after our talk with Johnson in the afternoon. He had let me think that he was simply strolling about. Now he claimed and was given a dance immediately. Johnson offered to get a partner for me, but I preferred to be a mere spectator, for a time, at least, so he left me and returned to the store.

Ben was there. Ben's family name, I learned, was Patton. He seemed to be a nice, manly young fellow, well built, clear-eyed, and of decidedly pleasing appearance generally; but he did not dance with Beatrice—indeed, seemed rather to ignore her. If there was any quarrel, he was not sullen about it, as is usually the way with men, but danced with other girls, even some of the señoritas, and seemed to be enjoying himself quite as much as any of the dancers.

And with Beatrice it was much the same. I danced with her once myself. I had become so interested in the little drama by this time that I purposely mentioned Patton in a casual way. The result was totally unexpected. Her attitude toward him had been one of indifference, so far as any one could see, and there was certainly no reason why

she should make any disclosure of her real feeling to me. But she blazed up instantly.

"I hate him!" she said fiercely. "I wish I could get away!"

"Can't you?" I asked, in surprise.

But it was evident that she already regretted her outburst, and I prudently backed away from the subject. Anyhow, I reflected, it is only a lovers' quarrel, and they will make it up to-morrow.

A little later, just after the next dance, I suddenly discovered that Applegate was missing. Instinctively my eyes searched the room for Beatrice, and they found her not. I looked for Ben, and found that he was dancing with a señorita; but it seemed to me that he was disturbed, and was also searching the room with his eyes. Knowing Applegate's susceptibility and heedless knight-errantry, I was troubled; it was so very natural for him to involve himself, and me, in unnecessary and unpleasant complications.

I went down to the store and asked Johnson if he had seen Applegate. He had not. I looked across at the house where Beatrice lived, one room of which served as a post office, and there was no light in the windows. It was of no consequence, anyway, for I should hardly have ventured over in search of him if there had been a light in every window. He was of age, six feet tall, and a man who would not welcome interference. There was nothing for it but to sit down with Johnson and wait for him to show up.

I naturally chose Beatrice as a subject for conversation, as I was anxious to know more about her.

"Rather young to be postmistress, isn't she?" I suggested, after a casual mention of her as a remarkably pretty girl.

"Oh, she ain't the real postmistress," returned Johnson. "Her father left her here when he went down into Lower California to do some prospecting, and he never come back. Nobody knows what happened to him. It's easy for a man who's traveling alone and don't know much about the country to get killed in the mountains. Anyhow, he

never come back, and Mrs. Coogan took her in. Mrs. Coogan is the postmistress, but she's so busy with the table board she furnishes the few that want it that she don't have time for the post office. So Beatrice does the work. She's got relatives up North somewhere; but somehow they never sent for her. Perhaps she never wrote to 'em. She's got some idea that she's going to get rich and famous out of a big novel she's writing, so Mrs. Coogan says, but most of us think she'd do better to marry Ben instead of holding him off like she does."

A simple story, simply told; but there was pathos in the idea of a girl being thus stranded in such a place, ignorant of her father's fate and pinning her faith to an absurd dream of literary fame. It was a story that would appeal strongly to Applegate's sympathies, which certainly did not make his mysterious disappearance any the less disquieting.

Johnson and I talked of many other things, my anxiety increasing. Ben came down from the hall, and stood for some time with his eyes fixed on the post office over the way, as if debating what to do. Just as I decided that he was about to go over there, he turned and went the other way.

The dance ended, and Johnson prepared to close up. There was nothing for me to do but go to bed. And then, just as I was bidding Johnson good night, Applegate sauntered in.

"Been over to the inn, old chap," he explained. "Thought you'd come over when you got ready."

It never had occurred to me to look for him there.

"D'y'e know," he went on, "a chap told me we could do better by going east to Imperial, instead of west to San Diego. Have to buy our horses, of course; but why cawn't we sell them again at Imperial? I fawncy it would be cheaper in the end than going by stage to San Diego."

Johnson, of course, was unsuspicious; but I, remembering Beatrice and what she had said to me, coupled with Applegate's disappearance, was not alto-

gether satisfied with this suggested change of plan.

"We left our luggage at Bowlder Pass," he argued; "and they tell me, old chap, that Imperial is much nearer to that."

"Bowlder Pass!" exclaimed Johnson. "Too bad you don't know the old Chinese trail. That would take you right there."

Know it! Had we not come over it within a few days under conditions that made us remember every rock and tree? But a mention of that fact would call for explanations we did not care to make.

"We've heard of it," I remarked carelessly. "It seems to be quite noted about here."

"Well, rather," returned Johnson; "but it ain't what it used to be. The Mexicans that make a business of running Chinese over the line don't go with them any more like they used to. Too many was caught, and they have learned a better game than that. They bring 'em to the line and then turn 'em loose with maps that show the trail and all the landmarks. The Chink then has to shuffle for himself; but lots of 'em get through, somehow, whether they use the old Chinese trail or some other. If there's anybody that still uses it the old way, it's Carlos Alvara, who got shot while holding up the bank at Colon the other day, and his little devil of a señorita. They're game to do anything."

We had good reason to know that, but we said nothing about it, and Applegate reverted to his original proposition.

"Don't you think that's the better way, old chap?" he asked.

"I'll think it over," I returned non-committally.

"But I've bought the horses, you know," he explained.

"You have!" I cried.

"Why, of course, old chap," he returned. "We'll be getting away early, don't you see, so I bought the horses from the fellow that told me about Imperial."

"I'll bet you paid three prices for them!" snorted Johnson.

"I fawncy I did," was Applegate's imperturbable reply; "but it's of no consequence."

I said nothing. There seemed to be nothing for me to say. My business was to stick to Applegate; and he seemed to have settled this matter.

"I bought *three* horses, old chap," he remarked casually as we were walking over to the hotel after bidding Johnson good night.

"Oh, you can't surprise me any more, Applegate," I returned. "All I have to do is to think of the biggest fool thing possible, and you can be relied upon to do it."

"I fawncy you're right," he agreed, in his usual unruffled way; "but I cawn't resist beauty in distress, don't you know. I cawn't quite make out what all the bally trouble is, but the girl wants to get away from this Ben person immediately."

"Why can't she go by stage?" I demanded irritably.

"He'll be watching, old chap," he explained. "I fawncy she thinks she's in some danger."

"Oh, she is, is she?" I retorted. "Well, how is this crazy scheme going to help matters? Are you looking for a nice little shooting scrape with a man who knows more about shooting in a minute than you and I can learn in ten years? Hasn't it occurred to you that he will follow?"

"No, old chap, he won't know. Mrs. Coogan will see to that. The jolly old girl has promised to tell the silly awss that Beatrice—Miss Barson—is kept to her bed by a cold or a headache, or something, and I fawncy we'll have reached the railroad before he knows she's gone. There cawn't be any trouble awfter that, you know."

"Well, what are you going to do with her then?" I persisted, still far from satisfied. "Two young fellows like you and me can't do the guardian act for a pretty girl in a civilized country without attracting some little comment."

"Oh, she has an uncle up there somewhere," he explained.

"Where?"

"I didn't awsk, old chap."

That was Applegate all over, heedless and unquestioning when he thought woman was to be served; and I told him so. I also told him many other things; so many and so pointed that he was finally offended. I could go by stage to San Diego, he said, and he would take her to Imperial alone. Of course, that was out of the question, and I surrendered. However, as a sort of final shot, I reminded him of the assurance he had given Johnson that he didn't want to steal anybody's girl.

"Quite right," he agreed cheerfully; "but I'm not stealing her, don't you know, for it's her own idea. Quite a pathetic case, old chap. She hates this Ben fellow, and she hates Campo, and she hates the life here, and she has a great ambition. Rawther silly, the ambition; but I cawn't tell her that, you know; and, anyhow, it's getting away from this Ben chap that she's awfter most. My word, how she hates him!"

"A girl doesn't always know when she hates," I commented.

"I fawncy this one does," returned Applegate; and I, remembering her outburst at the dance, was not prepared to dispute him.

"How did she happen to give you her confidence on such short acquaintance?" I asked.

"Really, I cawn't say," he replied. "The ladies all seem to trust me, somehow." I had had previous proof of that, so I was in no position to challenge the statement. "I was with her quite a bit in the awfternoon," he went on; "and I dawned with her most of the evening. Then it was so hot in there, and so sort of garlicky, don't you know, that we went out and strolled along the road; and I don't know how it happened—the moonlight and all that, perhaps—but soon she was telling me how she hated everything here, this Ben fellow most of all, and wanted to get away—had to get away at once or she didn't know what would happen. And directly awfter that, old chap, I was buying the horses from a Mexican that she told me about. All that bally

rot about a man at the hotel, of course, was for Johnson."

The situation looked no better to me after this explanation. In fact, the explanation did not seem to explain, and I was inclined to be impatient with him."

"Led you on very nicely!" I remarked tartly.

"Don't say that, old chap," he cautioned. "I cawn't permit it."

"Well, what is this Ben trouble?" I demanded.

"I fawncy it's something quite horrible," he replied; "but I don't know the details. She was almost hysterical when she spoke of it; said she'd loved and respected him up to their last meeting, don't you know, but now knew how false and despicable he is. It was quite tragic, I assure you. I offered to fight the mucker, but she wouldn't have it at all."

"Lucky for you!" I commented.

"I fawncy you're right," he admitted; "but I'd have done it, you know."

"Oh, I know it," I replied. "You'd fight a bull with your bare fists for a petticoat."

"Not for a petticoat, old chap," he returned. "There'd have to be a woman in it."

Naturally, I meant that, but I did not attempt to explain. I was too troubled for that. In spite of Applegate's confidence, it seemed to me that we were involved in a serious adventure. There was too much mystery in some phases of the affair to suit a cautious man. However, there was nothing for it now but to go ahead.

We were up almost as soon as we went to bed, for it was important that we get away at least an hour before the stage was due to start if we were to escape the espionage of Ben. Applegate led the way; and about half a mile up the road we found a Mexican waiting with three horses. Beatrice was also there. Applegate was now troubled, for no one of the horses carried a side-saddle. He called the attention of the Mexican to that oversight.

"The señor should know that it is not to be had in Campo," was the reply;

"but the señorita is of the country, and will not need it."

Beatrice laughed and slipped off her skirt, disclosing leggings and loose riding breeches. The waist and jacket she wore seemed to fit in with this costume quite as well as with the skirt, and I could not see that she lost anything of attractiveness by the change. The skirt was rolled up and strapped behind the saddle, together with a bundle that she carried.

"We have neither the sidesaddle nor the divided skirt here," she explained, "so we must do as best we can."

"My word!" was all Applegate could say. "Quite like Sally Otis, don't you think?"

"Who's she?" demanded Beatrice quickly.

"A girl that rides bucking bronchos for sport," explained Applegate.

"Oh, I couldn't do that," she returned. "It's enough for me to ride a horse that's broke and gentle. Are you ready?"

We were, and I noticed that she let Applegate help her to the saddle, although it was evident that she was quite capable of mounting unaided.

The first hour of our ride was uneventful. We talked of many things, none of them of any importance, although I verified Applegate's statement that the journey was made with Mrs. Coogan's sanction, and that she had agreed to keep Campo in ignorance of the girl's departure for at least a day. That made me the more anxious to get some satisfactory explanation of the flight, and I finally made casual mention of Ben.

"The brute!" she cried fiercely. "If you only knew what he said to me, the humiliating proposition—no, demand—that he made! No self-respecting person could have listened to it for a minute! Oh, how I hate him!"

"It would be a favor, you know," suggested Applegate, "if you'd let me go back—"

"No, no, no," she interrupted, in great perturbation; "not for anything."

I repented of my attempt to solve the mystery in this way, and changed the

subject by asking her about the novel I had heard she was writing. Her eyes brightened, and she was all enthusiasm in an instant. It was a story of European society, with dukes, and earls, and countesses, and balls, and palaces, and duels, and all the other people and things of which she knew nothing. She was sure that fame and fortune would be hers as soon as it was completed. It had occupied her thoughts by day and her dreams by night for nearly a year, and was as yet but half finished. There were fights, and dances, and flirtations, and plots, and counterplots, and so much of love interest that I wondered how there could be room for anything else. Her enthusiasm and confidence were boundless. With all those grand personages, and aristocratic splendors, and thrilling events, it could not fail of success.

Applegate and I looked at each other, and were sorry. If she must write, why could she not write of things she knew something about? Why could she not locate her story there in the mountains or at the gem mines of Lower California, where there were characters as interesting and happenings as dramatic as any that London ever saw? But this was all commonplace to her, so we sighed, and made no effort to disturb her dream. The awakening would come soon enough.

Then, after some desultory talk of other things, she surprised us by herself mentioning Ben in a way altogether at variance with her previous attitude.

"I wonder what he'll say when he gets my note," she remarked.

"Your note!" I exclaimed, aghast.

"Why, yes," she returned, apparently unable to understand my amazement. "I left a farewell note for him, and told him he'd never, never, never see me again."

"Oh, I say, now," put in Applegate plaintively, "you didn't do that, did you?"

"Why, of course," she replied.

"Well, I cawn't tell you what he'll say, but I know jolly well what he'll do," said Applegate. "He'll be awfter us."

"I wonder if he will," she mused, as if the idea had not occurred to her before, and did not particularly worry her now. "Yes, I think he will," she added; "but it will be too late. I told the Mexican not to deliver the note before——"

"I fawncy, from what I've heard," interrupted Applegate, "that you cawn't trust a Mexican."

"Yes, that's true," she admitted. "I should have thought of that."

It seemed to me extraordinary that she had not thought of it, and I was also puzzled by her calmness in considering the possibility of pursuit. It was difficult to reconcile this with her previous perturbation and resentment. I noticed, too, that Applegate was glancing back apprehensively.

"Perhaps," I suggested to Applegate, "we'd better take the old Chinese trail."

"Oh, do you know it?" she cried. "Then we *must* try it! That will fool him if he tries to follow."

Somehow these sudden and incomprehensible changes were making me decidedly uneasy. However, our best hope of escape, in case of pursuit, now lay in the old Chinese trail to Bowlder Pass, although we deemed it only fair to tell her that this would mean two days on the road instead of the one that would take us to Imperial.

"Oh, I don't mind that," she replied, "and we must do what we can to escape him. It's all my fault, anyway. I had no business to leave the note with the Mexican. I should have left it with Mrs. Coogan."

"Or not at all," suggested Applegate.

"Oh, I had to leave some word," she returned.

I couldn't see why, but I let it pass. Feminine vagaries were always beyond me; and this affair seemed a little more incomprehensible than any other in my experience.

Applegate and I had no difficulty in picking out the point at which the old Chinese trail crossed the Imperial road; but just as we were about to turn into the one from the other, Beatrice suddenly swung herself lightly from the saddle to the ground.

"Chinks!" she exclaimed. "Chinks!"

She pointed to the print of Chinese sandals in the dirt. "A bunch of them have just come over the line! See! There are a dozen of them!" She ran here and there, pointing. "They went up the trail," she added, and followed the footprints a little way up the trail herself, leading her horse.

"What of it?" asked Applegate, bewildered. "What's all the bally fuss about?"

"Why, we'll catch them," she replied, in surprise.

"A dozen of them!" I exclaimed.

"Of course," she returned. "I could do it myself."

"But what do we want of the slant-eyed chaps?" objected Applegate. "We haven't lost any, don't you know."

"Oh, I'd like to catch some Chinks!" she declared. "I've seen lots of them brought in, but I never caught one myself. Anyhow, it's our duty to get them and turn them over to Uncle Sam's men. It will be great sport, too. Come on!"

She mounted again before either of us could assist her, and led the way up the trail. It was soon evident, however, that she was mistaken in at least one matter; the Chinamen had crossed the Imperial road much earlier than she supposed, for we had had no glimpse of them after an hour of as fast riding as the rough trail permitted. I was glad of it. A single Chinaman might be a meek and lowly mortal; but it did not seem to me wise for two men and a girl to attempt to capture a dozen.

Beatrice seemed to lose interest in the chase in time, too, and reverted to the subject of Ben, sometimes fiercely vindictive for the insult he had put upon her, and sometimes recalling commendable traits. Indeed, she was about as surprisingly and disconcertingly inconsistent as it is possible for a woman to be, and that is saying a good deal. But her comments were mainly bitter now. He was hateful, and selfish, and inconsiderate, and his offense was one that could not be condoned.

Through it all, as a sort of excuse for mentioning him after her outburst when I had attempted to do so, she was considering the chances of his getting

word in time to follow, and apologizing for her folly in leaving the note with the Mexican.

Thus, with no further sign of the Chinamen, we came to one of the little, hidden cabins that had been used as way stations on the old trail, and we decided to rest there briefly and eat our luncheon, provided we could find any. Our departure from the Imperial road had upset our calculations with respect to food, but Applegate and I had reason to know that at least some of the apparently deserted cabins along the trail concealed supplies.

The sight of the cabin, however, seemed to give Beatrice a different idea. She swung from her saddle before either Applegate or I had time to move.

"Wait!" she cautioned. "I understand now."

She pushed open the door, and the next moment there were grunts, and squeals, and cries, and the shuffling of many feet.

Startled, puzzled, fearful for the girl's safety, Applegate and I sprang from our horses and rushed to the cabin. She met us at the door, smiling triumphantly, her little revolver in her hand.

"I got 'em!" she announced. "Did you hear 'em squeal and squirm when I pounced in on 'em and ordered 'em to line up?"

"Got what? Got who?" I demanded.

"The Chinks," she explained. "I ought to have known they'd cross in the night and hide out during the day; but I didn't think of it until I saw the cabin."

She certainly had them. They were lined up against the wall, with hands upraised and teeth chattering. Or perhaps they were only talking. Chinese talk sounds a good deal like teeth chattering.

"Fawncy that!" commented Applegate, looking from the girl to her prisoners. "I'm glad you're not awfie me."

"Search them," she ordered. "They may have opium, and Uncle Sam pays money for the capture of smuggled opium."

We searched them, but found only a

few knives and one back-number revolver, which we confiscated.

"Too bad!" she sighed. "But it was bully fun while it lasted! How they did squeal and dance!"

"D'y'e know," remarked Applegate, "I fawncry there's some of them would stick you if they had a chawnce."

"Perhaps," she conceded; "but the joke of it is I didn't give them the chance."

"Is that a joke, now?" asked Applegate soberly.

"Isn't it?" she demanded.

"You American women," he commented irrelevantly, "are always giving me such jolly surprises. I cawn't make you out."

"Neither can the American men," she retorted, "so they have given up trying."

"It was daring, you know," he persisted; "but I cawn't see the jest."

"Perhaps you'll see it when you're standing guard over the Chinks," she laughed. "Keep an eye on them, please, and I'll see what we can do in the way of lunch."

She found some canned things in a cupboard, and then left, informing us that we'd eat outside when she was ready, as she did not care for the company of Chinamen at meals.

Applegate followed her with his eyes in a puzzled way.

"What's the answer, old chap?" he asked.

"To what?" I queried.

"Beatrice."

"I don't think there is any," I replied. "How many kinds of a surprise has she been to you since last night?"

"I cawn't say," he answered apologetically. "Awfter I get up to a milion I get tired counting. But that's of no consequence at all," he went on. "It's been all one bally surprise—what you call a continuous show—down here, from Johnson's silly raid story to Beatrice's astonishing transformations. I fawncry Johnson gave us the keynote of the bally country in that ancient history tale, don't you know?"

"He did," I agreed. "There was a lesson in that story, only we didn't know

it. Always expect the unexpected along the Mexican line."

"Right-o," said Applegate. "Only I cawn't think what to expect next, old chap; and if I should expect it, it wouldn't be the unexpected, you know, so it wouldn't happen, and how would we be any the better off, then?"

While this sounded like good reasoning, it was too involved for me, so I went out to look after the horses, leaving Applegate to guard the Chinamen.

Beatrice had found a shady spot a little distance from the cabin, and was there arranging for our midday meal.

"Wouldn't it be a joke," she remarked as I passed, "if Ben had the sense to turn into the trail?"

I began to think, with Applegate, that she had a peculiar sense of humor. At any rate, I could see no joke in that possibility. However, it seemed so improbable that I gave no further thought to the matter until, after attending to the horses, I saw Ben striding toward her. He had evidently left his horse on the trail in order not to give warning of his approach, and his appearance certainly was sudden and altogether unexpected. Applegate and I started on the run to intercept him; but Applegate, having the shorter distance to go, was there first.

"We cawn't permit this, you know!" he cried, throwing himself in front of the advancing man.

Ben stopped short and slipped his right hand into his coat pocket. My blood went cold as I noted a suspicious bulge and realized that he had Applegate "covered" from the pocket. Applegate himself seemed to grasp the situation at the same moment, but he was quite helpless. It is the custom to carry a revolver in that country, but the tenderfoot is quite as helpless with one as without. He usually carries it in his hip pocket, where it is about as serviceable in an emergency as it would be if he kept it in a case with a time lock. Applegate was a tenderfoot; so was I; Ben was not. There had been no "gun" in evidence as Ben approached, and there was none now; but we knew we were entirely at his mercy. Still, Applegate, although very white, held his ground.

"The lady is under our protection!" he declared.

There was a moment of tense silence. To move was to court instant death; for, while it was Applegate who was immediately in front of him, a very slight shift of that pocketed hand would put me in line, and Ben scowled unpleasantly at both. My fascinated gaze was on that coat pocket. Aside from Applegate's present defiance, there was ample reason, from Ben's point of view, for rancor.

It was probably only a few seconds that we stood thus, waiting, but it seemed ages. Then I heard a little, quavering voice say: "Don't do it, Ben!" and all eyes shifted instantly to Beatrice. She stood a little to one side now, and her pistol, held in a wavering hand, was pointed straight at Ben. I noticed the unsteadiness of the hand particularly. She had been as cool and confident as a veteran when she rounded up the Chinamen; but now the pistol wabbled uncertainly.

Ben noted this, and laughed, as he stepped forward to take the pistol from her. This was unfortunate for him. It took his attention from Applegate, and it startled Beatrice. Two shots rang out almost simultaneously just as Applegate hurled himself bodily upon Ben and bore him to the ground. Beatrice was almost as quick. She was hovering over the two and trying to drag Applegate off by his hair before I could get into the scrimmage at all. Then the tangle was such that I could only circle about on the outskirts and look for an opportunity to close in effectively.

"Oh, I've shot him! I've shot him!" cried Beatrice, struggling frantically to pull or push Applegate off.

"My word!" expostulated Applegate. "All I want is a chawnce to get up, don't you know?"

"Let him alone!" she ordered fiercely. "Don't you see he's hurt?"

"I fawncy he is," agreed Applegate, as he finally succeeded in disentangling himself; and the fact that Ben made no effort to continue the struggle seemed to be corroborative evidence.

"The gun!" I cautioned.

7

"I've got it, old chap," said Applegate. "That's what I went awfter, you know."

"I'd have given you a better run for your money," remarked Ben, sitting up, "if she hadn't winged me." He moved his right arm cautiously. "But it's only a flesh wound," he added, relieved.

Instantly she was on the ground beside him, opening his shirt where a little splotch of blood showed near the shoulder.

"Oh, Ben! Ben!" she wailed. "I didn't mean to do it! You know I didn't mean to do it!"

"Sure you didn't," agreed Ben.

"But I couldn't let you shoot Mr. Applegate," she went on hysterically. "I was afraid you would, and there seemed only one way to stop it. But I was so nervous, Ben, over pointing a gun at you that I pulled the trigger when you startled me."

"Yes," returned Ben dryly, "and the shock of that bullet made me let go without meaning to; but it jarred my aim, which was lucky for somebody."

It may have been due to the fact that she herself was responsible for the wound; but it seemed to me that Beatrice was as tenderly solicitous as the most devoted sweetheart. Her attitude toward him was not at all what I should have expected; but, then, her whimsicalities had already trained Applegate and myself to expect the unexpected always; and there was also the natural feminine sympathy for one who is hurt to help account for her attitude. She was inconsistent; but she had been that ever since we first met her.

"I'm so sorry, Ben," she rambled on as she bound up his wounded shoulder, "so sorry. I never meant to do it! It's awful—just awful—that I should shoot you! But you did care enough to follow, didn't you, Ben?"

"I certain did."

"And then I shot you! Oh, Ben, I wish I could make you understand how sorry——"

"Oh, there's a way," interrupted Ben laconically, whereat she became suddenly silent.

"There's a way," he repeated.

"Not that, Ben," she faltered; "not after what you said—what you threatened."

"Oh, forget that!" he exclaimed impatiently. "Will you let me tell you something—privately?"

"Of course."

Applegate and I, remembering what had gone before, were disposed to interfere.

"Oh, it's all right," she assured us. "Ben wouldn't hurt me."

"I should say not!" declared Ben; and we let them go.

"Now, what d'ye make of that?" asked Applegate, as they turned into the trail and disappeared.

I recalled the various things she had said, mentally reviewed her extraordinary course throughout, and I could make nothing of it.

Half an hour later, having completed the preparations for lunch, we began to feel uneasy, and fifteen minutes later we decided to follow.

Just out of sight, at a turn in the trail, we almost stumbled upon Ben and Beatrice. Ben was seated on the ground, his back to a rock, and Beatrice, encircled by his left arm, was comfortably and contentedly nestling against his good shoulder.

"Beatrice has decided to go back with me," announced Ben, as they rose and turned back with us.

"But how about all this bally row?" asked Applegate.

Ben laughed. "Ever hear of the larger life?" he queried.

"Why, yes," replied Applegate. "Lots of women are talking that silly rot, you know."

"Well," explained Ben, "that's been her angle ever since she got to reading about it and started her book, and it near drove me crazy."

"But the horrible demand, you know, and the threat," persisted Applegate.

Ben's face flushed a little, and Beatrice's a little more.

"I was some hasty, I guess," he said; "but I was desperate. The larger life, which means the book, was claiming her when I wanted her, and we quar-

reled over it. First I told her to throw it away and read the marriage service and the cook book instead, which was a fool thing for me to do, for it hurt and insulted her. Then, when that only made things worse, I threatened to burn it myself if ever I could lay hands on it, which was even foolisher. But I was mad enough to do it then, having been stood off so long on account of it; and she was mad enough to think she'd rather have the book than me. So she skipped when the chance came."

"And now?" asked Applegate.

"Well, we've sort of compromised," laughed Ben rather sheepishly. "I'm willing she should write until she's lame, and she's willing to give up the novel if I say so. I guess things looked some different to both of us when it come to putting distance between us. Anyhow, I give up, and was willing to agree to anything to get her back, and she was regretful enough to leave her footprints where you turned from the road, so's I couldn't go wrong if I had a mind to follow."

Applegate and I exchanged glances. Nothing but a silly lovers' quarrel, and—

"The Chinks!" cried Beatrice suddenly, as we neared the cabin.

We had forgotten them in the excitement; and a glance now told us that they had stolen silently away, taking our lunch and everything else in the line of food that they could find.

"I fawncry that's the limit," said Applegate resignedly.

Reviewing the whole affair from Campo to the cabin, and the very foolish part we had played in it, as it looked to us now, it seemed as if it should be the limit, but it was not. After Ben and Beatrice had departed, Applegate remembered something else.

"There's the horse, old chap," he suggested.

"What horse?" I asked.

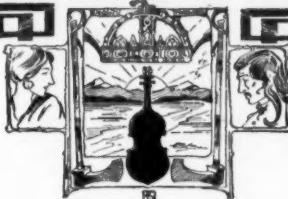
"Beatrice's horse," he explained. "I paid for it, you know."

"It will be a wedding present," I said.

"Right-o," agreed Applegate; but it seemed to me he sighed as he said it.

THE SAVAGE

By F. BERKELEY SMITH



ALTHOUGH Pest was awake for the night, the cafés choked with tobacco smoke and alive with music of her gypsy bands, ancient Buda, that snug, old town across the Danube, was going to bed, too old for late hours.

But few lights remained to designate her taverns and her crooked hill streets, and these now went rapidly out, one by one, as if some unseen hand beneath the blue veil of moonlight was stealthily putting away Buda's jewels for the night. Standing firm above the low, rambling town strewn about its base, the sheer walls and domed roofs of the new Royal Palace gleamed under the full spring moon like the granite sides of a mountain.

Upon the white marble roof of a modern villa in Pest overlooking the quay of the moonlit river, in two wicker chairs, drawn cozily up to a coffee table, upon which a single candle glowed under a scarlet shade, the young Countess Anna Navieskowska and myself smoked in silence—that restful understanding which is the right of old friends—old friends, I say.

The Countess Navieskowska possessed that calm, savage beauty peculiar to Russian women of noble blood, a subtle beauty which is purely racial. You saw this in her fine nose, in the curve of her delicate nostrils, in the sensitive, expressive mouth, cold almost to cruelty in repose, alert, eager, and frank as a child's when she smiled, baring her exquisite teeth—you saw it, too,

in the ivory whiteness of her skin, in her slender, shapely hands with their tapering fingers.

She lay immovable in her chair, her small head pillowed deep among the cushions, the pure oval of her face framed by her intensely black hair, which she wore *en bandeaux* half hiding her temples and her small ears. Her dark, brilliant eyes were half closed—her slim, sinuous body wrapped snugly in a rug of soft gray fur shielding her bare neck from the night breeze, her young throat showing above the edge of fur as white as ivory in the moonlight.

Had my friend the Countess Navieskowska remained in Moscow after her husband's exile, I am certain she would have lost her reason. No woman ever loved her husband more than she. She idolized him, and fought with an indomitable courage to save him, even to that last agonizing day when all hope was gone, and he who had been fearless enough to speak his mind, began his long journey to Siberia, a political prisoner. Far better had they shot him, as they intended—far better!

Thus had the countess come to Budapest with her sorrow. Here she could live quietly, surrounded by her many Hungarian friends, whose duty it was, like my own, to cheer her brave, young heart, to help her forget, to amuse her, for she was much beloved.

Now and then, as I lay gazing up at the great vault of sapphire above us, powdered to-night with millions of stars, the countess slowly raised her

tapering fingers to her parted lips, and blew through two rows of pearls a little smoke from the best of Russian cigarettes, that rose and vanished like a whiff of incense in the cool night breeze. Would that the memory of *him* might have vanished as easily for the sake of his poor lady!

Vague sounds drifted up from the Danube veiled in mist. The murmur of men's voices from strange craft moored along the quay out of the worrying current, the soft, mocking laughter of women, coming from no one knew where save from below in the moonlight, the sudden whine and creak of a rudder sweep as some high-stermed barge was disgorge from the cavernous arch of a bridge, and proceeded prudently in the grip of the silver tide.

Again sounds that were short and sharp as a pistol shot. The dropping of an oar on a passing deck, the plunge of a timely anchor; then all again would be still—so still that the changing breeze carried faintly across from the outskirts of Buda the strident music of a peasants' dance.

A cock crowed lustily, seemingly from mid-stream.

The Countess Navieskowska touched my hand.

"You are not cold, my poor friend?" she asked dreamily.

"Cold?" I laughed. "In this paradise? One is warm with its beauty."

With that rapid, feline liteness peculiar to her race, she glided back against the pillows, turning to me with her frank smile, her dark eyes illuminated for an instant by the leaping flame of the candle beneath the scarlet shade, whose glow flushed with a rosy light the curve of her throat and chin.

"You have been asleep," I ventured.

"Nearly," she confessed in her low, cool voice, which always seemed to me to be stifling the memory of tears. "Yes, for a little while I slept. The moonlight is kinder than the dark. Now I am quite awake," she added, with a forced little laugh. "Come! You shall tell me—ah, yes, about your gypsy—your savage with his black fiddle, the one you promised I should hear."

She turned upon her side, pillowing her cheek in the palm of her left hand—ringless, save for its thin, gold memory of him, and I began gladly under the eager gleam of her eyes, as the candle flame died in its socket.

"You shall hear my gypsy if I can find him," I declared. "Banda Béla is the devil to find when you want him. You see, being a pure-blood gypsy, he plays wherever his savage whim pleases him; never in the well-known cafés, generally in one of the poorest in Pest, and then not for long. He falls in love too easily. A pretty woman is as irresistible to him as gambling or a new suit of clothes. You can never depend on this thirty-sixth son of the great Banda Laczi—the most famous of all the gypsy fiddlers that Hungary has known for half a century. Poor old Banda Laczi died when Béla was a boy.

"Turn your head! Can you see that barrack of a building over there close to the church? It is a sordid, old tenement. It is where nearly all the gypsy bands in Pest have lived for generations. It is there that the great Banda Laczi died. He whose name was a household word in the land of the Magyars. He who played before the king, before princes and noblewomen at the coming-out parties of the little princesses.

"Everywhere that black fiddle of his was heard. In Pest and Buda, in the castles along the Danube, at the great hunting and wedding feasts that lasted often for days; as far as the snow peaks of the Tatra they summoned their favorite gypsy, old Banda Laczi, and they filled his servile hand with gold. It was he who knew how to cure their sorrows, put fresh courage in their hearts. Love, gayety, and good-fellowship followed in the wake of his fiddle. Ah, they loved him!"

The countess murmured in Russian: "*Bose moi, Bose moi Bose! Biedny moi loubiemie!*" Her voice full of sympathy as I paused for a whiff of my cigarette. I saw that she was interested, for she had forgotten her own. Presently it dropped from her hand, and a spark

scurried toward the gutter of the low balustrade.

"And so, old Banda died," I resumed, "over there in that wretched tenement, in a high-post bed, under an embroidered coverlet, surrounded by his wives and his many children; his black fiddle lay across his knees, a silver salver across his lap; this and the coverlet he had purchased with the last of his gold. With his last strength he sliced and partook of a ham from the silver salver to prove to all the world he was a gypsy and not a Jew. He had played before the king! He wished to die like a prince.

"So you see, my dear countess, the kind of proud gypsy stock Banda Béla came from. He was the great Banda's favorite son. The black fiddle fell to his lot. It is amazing that Béla has not smashed its precious shell a thousand times in his escapades. It was somewhat like giving a wild man a rare egg for safe-keeping. Escapades! Béla has had no end of them." I laughed. "Do you know that a few years ago that devil of a Béla nearly kidnaped the wife of a foreign ambassador?"

The countess opened her eyes wide.

"I do not wonder you are surprised," I continued. "You who in Russia regard the serf as incapable of revolt, even when it is a question of the heart. But what I tell you is quite true. He nearly kidnaped the wife of a foreign ambassador!"

"That could not have happened in my country," she said slowly. "Your over-gallant gypsy would have been knouted to death." A look of pain came into her dark eyes I had not seen before. "Ah! Those poor, dumb people of ours!" she added. "My heart has ached for them more than once, my friend. I have seen with my own eyes such cruelty—ah, God, such cruelty!" Here she again broke off into Russian, seeming to forget my very presence.

"*Da, tak bezchlowichestwo zestoko! l milocerdie nie kogda nie znaiet! Boze moi!*" (Yes! Such inhuman cruelty, and mercy is unknown to them! My God!)

For a moment she was silent.

"Kidnaped," she repeated, rousing herself suddenly from her reverie. "That is funny!"

She leaned nearer, eager for me to resume.

"It was not so funny for his excellency," I declared. "He threatened to kill Béla on sight."

"If he could find him," she interposed naively.

Precisely. Béla had vanished. Not even his great friend, old Toll Lajos—fat, contented, old Toll Lajos, who plays the clarinet better than any other—knew where he was that time. Béla has the strength of a bull, and an ungovernable temper. In point of muscle he is a match for ten able-bodied ambassadors, but he ran like a thief, like all gypsies; they are great cowards. A Hungarian with a stick can scatter twenty of them with guns."

"And is he good-looking, your gypsy?" she asked, as fascinated as a child now listening to a new fairy tale.

"Um! He reminds you a good deal of a clean, well-fed brigand. Stocky, with shoulders and arms like a blacksmith," I added, as she stretched forth a white arm toward a silver box of cigarettes, and I struck a match in the moonlight.

"Banda Béla is now, I should judge, past thirty," I continued, "and too lazy in his way to have learned any language save his own gypsy tongue. Even his understanding of Magyar is very limited. His gray, jadelike eyes have that peculiar glitter in them of a wolf's, especially when a new air or a pretty woman pleases him. There is the touch of the brute, too, in his short-cropped, black side whiskers and his black mustache, which he dyes and keeps neatly trimmed over his heavy, determined jaw. Add to this his swarthy skin, and you have Béla, all save his smile. His smile is irresistible."

"It is not a very attractive picture you have drawn of your gypsy," said she, and I thought I detected a note of disappointment in her voice.

"You see, I am giving the devil his due," I returned, "and Béla is mostly devil. Last year he fell in love, and fol-

lowed her to her own camp. She was sixteen years old, and the daughter of the chief's favorite wife, but she left him in a week for one of her own tribe. Once, Toll Lajos told me, Béla was camped with some gypsies near Vacz, and drove half a day over the wind-swept, fenceless country to find him. We were always good friends, Béla and I, but I learned from a village where they had played at a dance the night before, that the camp had stolen a pig, and had been driven off."

"Tell me more of his love affairs," she asked eagerly.

"He will tell you most of them on his fiddle," I replied. "You shall hear them if I can find him. I'll hunt up old Toll Lajos to-night; he will know where Béla is if any one does."

Again she stretched forth her hand, this time covering my own with a friendly pressure.

"You are very good," she said. "It is what I need—music—the music of your gypsy."

"And when you have heard that black fiddle," said I, "it will have told you better stories than I. It will tell you strange tales of love and grim legends of the forest. It will have laughed and cried to you. It will have won your heart."

She gave a little sigh of delight. Below us the river lay silent in its course, the capricious breeze shirring its silver tide under a paling moon.

"You will not forget your promise," she said, as I rose to bid her good night.

Then I summoned her maid, and took my leave, and, late as it was, started in search of Toll Lajos.

"Ah! Banda Béla!" he exclaimed, as I questioned him at an early hour of the morning in a big café. "Yes, yes—he play now in Lipot Café. He came now two days already." And smiling, he held up, in explanation of his broken English, two pudgy brown fingers over the wet mouthpiece of his short clarinet.

Pest the next night lay glistening under a thrashing rain—a downpour that flushed the gutters, and sent their tor-

rents roaring into the sewers. Hurrying forms, bent under umbrellas, struggled on in the gusts of wind, en route to a warm refuge in their favorite cafés.

Officers in hooded night coats passed, sturdy peasant girls, barelegged to the knees, splashed by, their layers of petticoats bobbing with their easy stride. The wiry cab horses flashed by at a spanking trot, some at full gallop, in the downpour. Yet this wretched night did not deter the Countess Navies-kowska.

A little before ten, we had crossed the broad Andrassy Ut in a cab, and were clattering along in a labyrinth of side streets toward the Café Lipot. Finally our steaming horse stopped before the door of a small café, whose smoke-fogged, curtainless windows, flanking a dingy corner, resembled the tank of an aquarium filled with watered milk made luminous within by a sizzling arc light. Before the door hung limply in the rain a tattered poster, announcing in big letters :

BANDA BÉLA

36th son of

BANDA LACZI

As we entered, and I led the countess down the single aisle of the crowded, little café, Béla grinned a welcome to me over the neck of the black fiddle.

The sudden appearance of this beautiful woman, the instant recognition that she was a lady and a noblewoman, seemed to electrify the band. There was a glitter of savage delight in Béla's jadelike eyes as he smiled and nodded to a vacant table close to him. Simultaneously the Czardas—that wild gypsy dance they were playing—burst into a quickened pace.

I caught sight of old Toll Lajos as the countess slipped into her chair beside me. He had deserted his big café to play with Béla. He had tried to grin a welcome to me over his short clarinet, but the frenzied speed of the Czardas kept his swarthy cheeks puffed and his pudgy fingers too busy

with his improvised obligato to do more than nod his head good-humoredly.

Every eye in the room was now on the countess.

It was a silent, respectful crowd of working people, with not more than a dozen women in the room. The men sitting over their coffee and rat-tail cigars, the collars of their damp overcoats turned up despite the heat.

In the snarl and swing of that wild Czardas, in the intricacies of its amazing harmonies and speed, not a note from the band accompanying the black fiddle was a fraction of a second late. Banda Béla swung them with him where he willed; now and then he forced his men with a yell of command, the black fiddle dominating them, its graceful neck lying in the hand of its master, a hand as quick and pliable as a woman's, as brutal in its massive strength as a fighter's.

It was a double band of sixteen men, and its two cymballums and two bass viols gave a snap and fire to the accompaniment that made one's nerves tingle. Moreover, they played with that compact ensemble that only gypsies can achieve in their own music—they who cannot read a written note and who follow purely by intuition and temperament. Béla seemed to take a devilish joy in trying to lose his men—by a sudden change of key, by a masterly speed that quickened to a blur the four slender hammers of the alert cymbalists as they flew over the maze of resonant strings of their cymballums.

Woe to him who did not comprehend or faltered! Béla rapped the delinquent sharply over the head with his bow. Again he crouched at the far end of the aisle, and, with a yell, rushed back at his band, arriving with the top note of a crescendo in an unexpected key. Again he would shout to them the names of a score of Czardas, and force them to follow him as he mixed their order. Still again he played with six bows at once gathered from his band, and flung them one by one back to them, until there was none left but his own to continue the air.

I turned to look at the countess. Her

eyes, grown strangely brilliant, were riveted on Béla, her lips parted, her breath coming quick.

"You are not disappointed?" I ventured.

"Ah! It is wonderful—wonderful!" she breathed in a voice scarcely audible, without turning her head.

The Czardas ended in three rapid vibrant chords. Presently the voice of a young girl hovered over the black fiddle—a low, tender voice, a voice in which lurked together timidity and fear, distrust and an aching heart. Suddenly it changed. The girl was laughing—that nervous laugh of innocence. Béla's eyes were smiling straight into those of the countess, and, to my amazement, her eyes now gazed into his own. The voice of the girl became sweeter, braver, as it sang its simple story—the beginning of an old legend.

The countess leaned forward, pressing her lithe body against the edge of the marble table. She slipped me a trembling hand—a hand upon which her rings to-night were warmer than her flesh. Her cheeks were luminous, her dark eyes now gleamed like jewels.

The voice of the girl sang over the ripple of a forest brook, and now the sighing forest wind rose from the belly of the black fiddle. Then followed the deep, earnest voice of a man.

The wind in the forest increased. Above it rose the full, passionate voice of the girl speaking her heart and mind. The voice of the man grew fainter, then rose in a last appeal. Then came a gentle sobbing—I could hear the voice of the man disappear in the forest.

It was a legend of unrequited love. No one but Béla could play it, old Banda Laczi had told it to him on the black fiddle when Béla was a boy.

With a low cry of despair, the legend ended. In the countess' eyes two tears welled beyond her dark lashes and trickled down to the corners of her closed lips. Painfully she drew a quick breath. She raised her head. Béla came forth and bowed.

I saw her gaze rest for a moment intently on the black fiddle, which he held

firmly gripped by the neck. Then I saw her slowly take in every detail of the man before her—his black, carefully brushed coat, the white silk handkerchief, embroidered with a green and red heart, that drooped beneath the standing collar, well open under his coarse, heavy throat and chin. She looked keenly up into his eyes now as if searching some good in them back of his smile—the smile of a good-natured brigand, whose mind was fascinated by the woman before him. It was as if a rose were being closely observed by a bandit.

"Thank you," murmured the countess.

"I—kiss—the—hand," he returned suavely, with a low bow and the pride of a conqueror.

"Egen! Egen!" he exclaimed excitedly in Hungarian, putting forth his free hand to me, which I grasped heartily—a hand that, much as a Magyar might have admired for its skill, no Magyar would have deigned to touch. The hand now bowed eagerly, grinning like children. So did a little boy of fourteen, who played the viola.

"My nephew, Varos," explained Béla to me, grinning back at the youngster.

He was a little embarrassed—this infant, with his overgrown violin, and turned his dreamy, black eyes shyly away, fearing he had been misunderstood. The countess smiled back at him, and, in his embarrassment, he blushed, and dropped his bow, which old Toll Lajos recovered for him under one of the cymballums. The old fellow laughed so that his small eyes nearly disappeared under his fat jowls.

As we left the dingy, little café long after midnight, I realized that all her good friends had done for the Countess Navieskowska was nothing in comparison to what Banda Béla and his black fiddle had accomplished; they alone had taken her completely out of herself.

Even as we drove back through the rain-swept streets, the countess had not recovered from their hypnotic influence. I noticed she was extremely nervous, and there still remained that brilliancy in her eyes that frankly I did

not like. It was as if she had taken a drug, and I reproached myself more than once as we drove on that I had been fool enough to have ever mentioned Banda Béla. Moreover, she was strangely silent.

Indeed, not until we were in sight of her villa did she open her lips.

"Will you grant me a favor?" she asked abruptly.

"With all my heart," I replied, little knowing what she desired.

"Then invite your savage to dinner—at my villa, if you wish."

"Banda Béla! But you do not know what you ask, my friend."

"You will do as I wish," she said, with a certain calm decision. "I wish to hear him alone"—she checked herself, fearing I might misunderstand—"that we might hear him alone, without his band."

"Banda Béla as your guest in your villa? But, my dear countess, that is impossible. Forgive me, but I know best."

"Invite him to your hotel then," she returned, piqued by my point-blank refusal.

"In Hungary," I explained, as calmly as I could, "they do not invite gypsies to dinner. It is unheard of. People would laugh at us. The very servants would smile in their aprons, and gossip about it for a year."

She turned sharply, flashing her dark eyes.

"Yet you gave Banda Béla your hand!" she exclaimed hotly.

I was amazed at her attitude. She, a noblewoman, defending a gypsy, an outcast, a vagabond! Had she completely lost her reason? Or was it only the passing whim of a semi-hysterical woman? I could dislodge the truth from her no longer.

"You think me a snob," I said.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I am not, and you know it. To invite that savage to dinner in your villa would be running a risk I do not care to take—two risks."

"The first?" she asked, in a low voice, ready to defend.

"The first, my dear countess, is that

Béla is a born thief, like all gypsies. You see that my reason is grave enough."

"You forget that my servant, Rossinoff, was once with the secret police in Petersburg," she returned simply. "He is not likely to loan Banda Béla the key of my jewel box."

"Granted!" I replied. "My second reason, however, is that I would not leave Béla alone with you an instant should the occasion be unavoidable."

She started.

"Do you suppose that serf I" she exclaimed. "No! No!" she laughed, brightening. "There is no danger in that, I promise you. Come! We shall invite, too, the little nephew. He speaks English, you say?"

"A little. He was with Béla's brother for a year in London, I believe."

"That is excellent. He shall act as our interpreter. We shall be a *partie carrée*. Then it will be quite safe."

She clapped her gloved hands in her enthusiasm, while I shrugged my shoulders, none too happy over the idea.

"Very well, then," I consented. "But not to your villa. He must never see the inside of your house. At my hotel then, at seven-thirty to-morrow. Béla will be free, for to-morrow is Good Friday, and no gypsy plays a note in public. It must be a fish dinner, for a gypsy to-morrow, at least, pretends to be a good Catholic, and does not touch meat. There will be no difficulty in persuading Béla to accept," I declared, as we stopped in front of the gate of her villa. "I shall see that he brings both the black fiddle and the little nephew. Banda Béla would rather dine with you than be thrown a hundred guldens."

She laughed deliciously; as happy as a child whose whim had been gratified, as I squeezed my way out of the musty cab, indicated the mud-smeared step for her slim foot, opened my umbrella, conducted her in a gentle rain to her waiting maid, and bade her good night.

You enter the Grand Hotel Magyar Salloida by a square hall, draped in magenta velvet curtains. Beyond this old-

fashioned entrance lies a vast ballroom, lighted only upon rare public occasions. At the extremity of this cavernous room, a narrow corridor leads in two turns and a discreet twist to a small private dining room without a bell.

It was in this *cabinet particulier* that our *partie carrée* was dining on the following night, Banda Béla facing his dreamy, black-eyed little nephew Varos. In a carved armchair, the Countess Navieskowska, radiantly beautiful in a décolleté gown of glittering steel-blue scales, sat facing me. It was a gown that only a great beauty could have worn. A woman whose subtle lines were perfection.

Banda Béla wore for the occasion a black broadcloth coat, a dress waistcoat, revealing an immaculate, many-plaited shirt front, and a black cravat ornamented beneath a standing collar by an oval silver brooch, studded with mother-of-pearl and turquoise, evidently a gypsy heirloom.

Though I well knew the suppressed amazement of the *maître d'hôtel*, and his equally sphinxlike waiters serving a fish dinner to two gypsies, they concealed their astonishment stoically, though I could not help catching sight of the positive alarm in the chief clerk's eyes as I went forward to welcome my guests on their arrival.

Like his celebrated father, Banda Béla had been summoned to play before a prince and princess, yet never in his whole life had the great Banda Laczi been bidden, as his son to-night, to dine with royalty.

This, at least, was what was passing in Béla's mind, for it was plain enough he took me for a nobleman of colossal importance and untold wealth. None but so supreme a personage as myself would have dared invite him. The wine, the silver dishes, the roses, the shaded lights, and the silent servility of the servants—all convinced him of this. True, he had heard of America and its millions, though America was as vague to him as China. I was evidently the Emperor of America's brother, and a multimillionaire.

Banda Béla was in the glory of his

savage pride. His smile to-night was keyed to one of devilish content. In the midst of this luxury with the most beautiful and gracious woman he had ever met within arm's reach of him—hampered as he was to explain all he felt, he talked incessantly in gypsy, which the dreamy-eyed, little nephew, waking up at intervals, like the Dormouse in "Alice in Wonderland," translated to the best of his infant ability to the countess and myself in his limited English.

At the end of every gypsy sentence, Béla drained his glass. Never had I seen a man drink as he did and keep sober. Though, like the martinet of an uncle he was, he allowed Varos nothing but lemonade. Before we had reached the salad, the bottle of mellow Tokay before him was empty; he, too, had drained the lion's share of champagne, and I now saw the surface line of my private bottle of Scotch whisky sink lower and lower under his active hand.

Now and then, the Dormouse would resume his struggles.

"My onk'l he say he happy," explained the Dormouse lazily. "That he soon play for the beautiful lady." And the Dormouse nodded sleepily over his third helping of ice cream to the black fiddle in its case in the corner.

"My onk'l he say he honor with heart the beauty of the lady. He honor with whole heart America and Russia."

"Alien Magyar nemsei!" I returned, drinking Béla's health in Hungarian, though it was risky, for his swarthy jowls now had a dull flush about them, and the cords of his bull neck stood out like bronze.

We had now reached our liqueurs. Béla, with a hand as steady as a surgeon's, lighted the countess' cigarette. She had been graciousness itself throughout this strange dinner; kind to the little nephew, clever in her repartee, and fearless in her undisguised admiration of the savage on her right. She turned now, and nodded pleadingly to the black fiddle in the corner.

There came from Béla a sharp command—the command of a general about

to lead a charge—and the Dormouse brought the black fiddle from its case.

Standing close to the countess, seated in her chair, Banda Béla began. The black fiddle awakened under his massive, vibrant hand; alive and eager for the conquest as if in league with its master. Its voice became insistent and human as a lover's.

Presently I saw the countess weaken and grow numb under its spell. Her white arms lay listless in her lap. She sat there as in a dream, a faint smile playing about the corners of her mouth, her eyes half closed, her head slightly bent, like a woman sure of acquittal.

Not for an instant did Banda Béla take his eyes from her; now and then he bent his black fiddle lower and nearer, until its voice spoke in her ear—little ears that burned and tingled with a strange delight. Banda Béla played to win her heart, and, by God, he did!

I felt the cold sweat creep to my forehead, and I grew sick at heart. She was no longer my gracious friend, but a woman pitifully drunk now under the power of sensuality. The nervous tremor of her hands, her brilliant, dilated eyes staring vacantly at the smoldering tip of her cigarette, burning itself out in her dessert plate. The catlike tenseness of her body sent my heart to my throat.

"Go to bed!" commanded Béla, over his sweeping bow to the sleepy nephew, who rose obediently, bowed, and left the room.

"Out!" he thundered brusquely in Hungarian to the *maitre d'hôtel*, who had opened the door indiscreetly.

Before I could summon the *maitre d'hôtel* back, to my dismay, he, too, disappeared. Unable to contain myself longer, I rose, and went over to the countess.

"This must end," I said, now thoroughly alarmed. "You will be ill."

She buried her face deep in her hands, shaking her head slowly in reply.

"Countess!" I exclaimed.

She did not raise her head, but broke into hysterical sobbing.

"Stop! Do you hear?" I cried, and

put forth my hand threateningly toward the black fiddle and its master.

Béla slipped aside and grinned, and a great dominant chord rose to mock me.

"Do you not see the countess is ill?" I declared, but he paid no heed.

Twice I opened the door, and shouted for the servants. The great ballroom beyond echoed my voice.

Again I went to her side.

"Anna!" I pleaded. "Listen to me."

She started at the sound of her name, then raised her head from her tear-stained hands.

"Play! Play! Play!" she insisted. "Play to me! Oh, play to me! Play!"

The voice of the black fiddle drowned her words.

The fight was in me now. I would have done my best, but I still held my head. He could have killed me with a blow, and I fight, I knew, would only make matters worse than they were. It would create an open scandal, and I dared not for her sake.

Béla understood me like a flash, as he caught sight of my clenched hands. Instantly the black fiddle assumed a tone of apology. It was my chance. Much as a dreaded it, I left the room, and sprang down the corridor, in search of the night clerk or the *maître d'hôtel*, who, I knew, would bring matters to a quiet, respectable end.

I had not taken three strides in the deserted ballroom before a stifled cry reached my ears. As I burst open the door of the private dining room, the Countess Navieskowska lay in Banda Béla's arms in a dead faint.

"You dog of a gypsy!" I shouted.

He wheeled sharply round with a look of insolent defiance, still holding her in his arms slightly clear of her chair.

The next instant I had seized the black fiddle that lay on the table, and, raising it above my head, threatened to smash it to pieces over the silver candelabra.

"Here is the end of this devil of yours!" I cried.

The threat told. He let the countess slip from his arms. Then he sprang toward me. Then, to my surprise, halted, a cowardly terror in his eyes. His voice came weakly, as if the effort strangled him.

"Pardon, seigneur!" he gasped. "Give me—give me—that."

His outstretched hands shook as if palsied, yet he dared not touch the black fiddle I still held threateningly above my head.

I glanced at the countess. She lay in the carved armchair as pale as wax and scarcely breathing.

"Seigneur!" he cried hoarsely. "I am a dog—give that to me. It was my father's, Banda Laczi's."

"Go!" I said, and I passed him the black fiddle.

By the time I had reached the countess, Banda Béla had vanished.

After some moments, which seemed interminable, she opened her dark eyes, and stared at me like a stranger. Then slowly I helped her to her feet, and, supporting her, we passed out together through the deserted ballroom.

"It was not your fault, dear friend," she murmured faintly.

She leaned wearily against me, uncertain of her strength, to gain her waiting carriage.

And yet, I repeat—no woman ever loved her husband more than the Countess Navieskowska. She idolized him, and fought with that indomitable courage to save him until the last—even when there was no hope.



THE WEAKER VESSEL

By Frank Condon

SPRING! Spring! Beautiful spring, when the robins and the pussy willows— Sure, this is another one of those vernal affairs, saturated with sap and redolent of the lush-green things that carpet the swelling bosom of the reviving earth. It begins on a Saturday afternoon, a week before Christmas, on which occasion a distracted feminine shopper, her arms filled with bundles and her mind with cross words, bumped headlong into Mamie O'Hara, on the corner of Twenty-third and Sixth Avenue.

"Hello, Mamie!" said the feminine shopper.

"Hello, Elvira!" Mamie replied. "Lemme introduce my friend. Mister Burnett, this is Miss Eaton. We used to room together."

Mr. Burnett bowed and smiled in a most friendly manner, mentally noting that Miss Eaton wore a hat as though she knew something about decorative effects, and that her complexion was irreproachable.

"I'm glad to know you," he murmured. "I'm particularly glad to meet you at this pleasing moment, because you look as though you might need some help with the bundles. Let me have the two big ones. Mamie's going to shake me in a minute, so it's all right."

"Isn't he the hasty thing?" Mamie laughed. "He'll be calling you Elvira before the next policeman goes by."

"Elvira is a nice name," Mr. Burnett said, taking the bundles. "I have heard of worse names than Elvira."

A half hour later Mamie had met her mother near the telephone booth in Park's Big Store. Mr. Burnett and Miss Eaton were left together. Mr. Burnett, sagging under a tolerable load of Christmas gifts, made himself genial and agreeable. He left Miss Eaton in the hallway of her home, and the last thing he did was to write down in his blue book the telephone number of the drug store on the corner, where the obliging clerk knew Elvira and invariably sent a boy around to get her when a person called up.

Christmas came and went. Elvira and Irving Burnett met frequently during January and February; also in March and April. They discovered numerous attractive qualities in each other, and whenever Irving entered the box office of a theater he purchased two tickets, where before only one had flipped out. He did this as a matter of course. He had come to the conclusion, without giving the matter analytical treatment, that he had more fun when he took Elvira to the theater with him than when he went alone.

In the first place, Elvira was a good-looking young woman. It pleased Irving to sit beside her in the subway and observe the admiring glance of the young bookkeeper across the aisle. It indicated his own good taste in selecting such a pleasing young woman as his companion; and, in addition to her ornamental qualities, Elvira was anything but solid bone from her throat up.

She was in conscious possession of a one-hundred-per-cent, thinking apparatus, and while she was only rounding

out her twenty-fourth year, she had met a large number of people, and had learned and remembered. When they were together, neither Elvira nor Irving was bored by the other, and the grand, complete, final total was that they got on swimmingly.

Furthermore, their friendship was a friendship. It may have occurred to Irving to hold Elvira's hand in the theater. He may have pondered upon the advisability of suddenly seizing her some night, in the hallway, and kissing her before she could stop him. He may have mulled over a number of expressions of love in his own mind. None of these things came to pass. He did not hold her hand in the theater or anywhere else. When he helped her into her cloak in the restaurant he took his arms away from her shoulders as soon as the cloak was in place. He never kissed her, and his avoidance of love talk would disgust even the newest reader of the black-and-white periodicals, in which there is a great deal of soulful conversation.

No—Irving was not a dead one. But there is no explaining to skeptics. It can only be stated, without passion, that a careful survey of Irving's past would lead to the conclusion that he was a thoroughly live one. He was twenty-nine years old, and he had lived in New York City for nine of the twenty-nine. The fact speaks.

The fountains began to splash in the public squares, and the crocuses pushed their way into the sunlight and smiled at the clerks eating lunches on the park bench. The twenty-four-sheet posters blossomed with the hyacinths, and the wonders of the circus colored the iron island in pinks, and yellows, and blues from the faces of a thousand bare walls. Men with tin buckets wandered about, painting the gas-pipe fences of the city's breathing spots and adorning the wooden seats with the never-failing spring-time green; and ever and anon a new bock-beer sign came forth with its time-honored goat, and informed a heavy-flanneled public that winter was no more.

The first open street car appeared on

Madison Avenue, where it has always appeared in spring for the last twelve years, and simultaneously the mind of Irving Burnett opened like a flower, and a strange feeling obsessed him.

He had been walking along the fringe of Central Park, sniffing the fresh odors and talking to Elvira about a new method which had been discovered of joining water mains. Suddenly he ceased, and, for a long time, the two walked on in silence. Then Irving said:

"Elvira, you certainly have pretty eyes."

Miss Eaton smiled and looked at Irving. It was not an investigating look, or an offended look, or a pleased look. It was merely a look of curiosity. She said nothing. After a time, Mr. Burnett took up the question of joining water pipes where he had left off.

In the hallway, Irving said good night as casually as had ever been his wont, and Elvira ran up the stairs. In her bedroom, she stared at her eyes for several moments, examining them intently, and humming a ditty consisting solely of "hms," which one invariably hums when one is giving a subject deep and prolonged thought. The eyes Elvira beheld were undeniably pretty ones. She had often been informed of the fact. But Irving Burnett had never mentioned it before.

The daisies came out like little, yellow tacks upon a new, green carpet, and the sparrows paired off and collected straws for the new rainproof dwelling under the eaves of less rainproof apartment houses. Your landlord came around in a pessimistic frame of mind, and informed you that your wall paper was practically as fresh and glowing as the day it was put on, and that you wouldn't need anything until fall. The crash of falling ice in the open-backed vans punctuated the pauses in the siren song of the deathless hurdy-gurdy, and little children took off their shoes and stockings, and displayed their pale feet to the warm sun.

Spring came out of its training quarters and began to bat three hundred, and Irving Burnett remarked to Elvira Eaton:

"Your people all must have had good mouths. You've got the prettiest lips and teeth I ever saw."

And Elvira smiled with pleasure.

"There's something different about you, Elvira," Irving continued. "Either you are changing, and have changed since I first met you, or my eyes are giving me the wrong photographs. I find myself studying you when you don't know I'm doing it, and I see a wonderful difference."

That night, Elvira hummed and smiled. She hummed when she thought of a number of things, but she smiled when she recalled that Irving had said he had studied her when she didn't suspect him of the scrutiny.

Spring! Spring!

Oh, you spring!

At the conclusion of a long period of serious thought in the seclusion of her own room, Elvira said aloud:

"Life is uncertain. No one can tell how long one is likely to live. Happiness is fleeting. We are here to-day and gone to-morrow. Opportunity knocks but once—that is, a genuinely desirable opportunity. A rolling stone gathers no moss."

You can see readily that Elvira had been thinking.

The following day, Elvira and Irving paused in front of a large store in Harlem. It was quite accidental. There are hundreds of stores on the street, but the two friends happened to halt directly in front of this particular one.

"Come in a moment," Elvira said to Irving. "I promised to buy a new food chopper for mother, and I mustn't neglect it any further."

It was a large store. It was an installment store. It was the sort of store where you go with twenty-five dollars, which you hand over to the first clerk you meet. You then purchase five hundred dollars worth of tables, chairs, frying pans, rugs, carpet sweepers, curtains, bedsteads, bath towels, chiffoniers, sofa cushions in burned leather, and cut-glass punch bowls; and the owners of the store spend the next seven years attempting to make you pay the balance of the bill.

Irving looked about him with freshened interest. He examined various articles while Elvira purchased the food chopper for her mother, and he noted the cost on the price tags. Elvira discovered Irving deep in discussion with a sales person, concerning the merits of brass bedsteads as compared with oak bedsteads.

Oddly enough—strangely, almost—Irving and Elvira happened downtown, where the merchants of Sparkle Row display their wares through plate-glass windows twelve feet wide. It was on another day. Elvira's sister had almost hopelessly fractured a bracelet, and Elvira had offered to have it patched up. The jeweler informed her that the operation was simple. Irving spent his entire time in the store gazing into a show case. Beneath the protecting sheet of glass were countless diamonds, set in dainty gold rings. There were diamonds of one carat, and diamonds of two carats, and on the wall was a sign which read:

WE TRUST YOU. THE GIRL TRUSTS YOU.
WHY HESITATE ABOUT THE RING?

Irving recovered himself with a start as Elvira returned from her conversation with the man who owned the shop.

Within ten days—yes, accuracy demands the entire truth—within a week, Elvira had to call on a girl friend who worked in the woodenware department of a well-known department store, and Irving was at leisure. He accompanied Elvira, and waited in the main aisle while she hunted up her friend. Directly facing him at the end of the long aisle was an enormous sign. It was a sign that is almost famous, because it looks at people from billboards in a great many cities, and it said, with vast impressiveness, speaking, of course, of the policy of the department store, and having reference to its method of supplying furniture:

WE FURNISH EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL.

To a person who might have had access to Irving's innermost thoughts, it would have been perfectly apparent that the subtle virus was at work. When

he walked alone in the Park and observed the flaming-breasted robin speaking to its mate about the spring house-cleaning, he was overcome with sweet thoughts of domesticity. He began to help young matrons lift their baby carriages over the curbstone, and the spectacle of a young woman hurrying out of the butcher shop with a bundle of chops for the evening meal made his heart rise and choke him.

The door was closed. The key had clicked in the lock. The captive already peered through the bars of his gilded cage. Elvira bought a dog license, and, to her huge embarrassment, wandered into the wrong department in the City Hall. The marriage-license clerk smiled gravely at the diffident couple, the reporters nudged each other jocosely, and almost wrote a humorous piece for the evening papers. All afternoon, after Elvira had finally secured the dog license, Irving thought intently of the big "Marriage License Bureau" sign over the door.

That evening the two called upon an old friend who lived in the Bronx, and Irving listened with interest while the hostess discoursed upon the many advantages of the apartment in which she lived, the extreme lowness of the rents, the angelic behavior of the janitor, the nearness of the subway station, the niceness of the neighbors, the beautiful moderateness of the groceries and meat shops.

After he left Elvira that evening, Irving figured intently with a pencil upon the back of an envelope.

The luscious sap trickled oozily from the maples on the Drive, and the Albany steamers began advertising in the papers, while the whippoorwills—

Irving said to Elvira:

"Let's you and I get married, Elvira. I make more than enough to run things."

"Do you mean that you really care for me that way?" Elvira asked, with a slight blush.

"I certainly do, Elvira! I want you

to be my wife from now on till we both die. I'm daffy about you!"

"You've never even kissed me," Elvira said protestingly.

"I know it, but I'm going to begin kissing you in a few moments, and I'll probably never let up. It's a funny thing, Elvira. Here we've been pals for months and ages past—just bully good chums, and somehow or other I didn't have any notion about changing our relations. Now I suddenly discover that I'm perfectly crazy about you, and that if you don't marry me immediately and get breakfasts for me in a bright-red morning gown I'll go away somewhere and drown myself in a swamp. You're the one girl in the world for me, and the amazing thing about it is that I seem to have discovered it just recently. It's perfectly wonderful, Elvira. When will we get married?"

"I think we ought to wait a week, at least," Elvira replied thoughtfully. "I'll have to buy a few things, and get out cards, and we'll have to find a suitable apartment. I think I'd like to live on the upper West Side. You can take the subway there every morning, and you can be home before six."

"Let's tell your mother about it tonight," Irving said. "I get a raise in salary in two weeks."

In the hallway, Irving kissed Elvira formally.

Within two weeks the carriages stopped before the little gray church on Madison Avenue. Elvira stepped forth in flowing silk robes. Irving followed her stiffly, wondering whether his white tie was still anchored to the button, or on the way toward his Adam's apple. The bells chimed joyously, and the organ began its solemn droning. At the end of the aisle, the minister, Bible in hand, stood waiting for Irving and Elvira.

Spring!

The crocuses and the daffodils lingered lovingly upon the tender, green sward, and the soft, whispering—Oh, finish it yourself!



THE ODD TRICK

By Jane W. Guthrie

POSSESSED of many of the temperamental qualities which matched his Irish name, John MacCarthy yielded readily to feminine influence—up to a certain point, but not beyond it; consequently, when engaged, one evening, over Peter Hayden's dinner table, and while testing the triumphs of Peter Hayden's chef, he found himself engaged also in gay banter with Peter Hayden's daughter, recently returned from travel and prolonged educational activity, he was thinking not so much of Lisa Hayden's fine eyes as of a project that had lived in his mind ever since his son, Daniel O'Connell MacCarthy, familiarly known as Con, had left off long clothes—an arrangement for his marriage with a woman of his father's choice.

The Hayden matrimonial connection, he reflected, might prove a very good thing for both Con and himself, irrespective of the fact that he was finding Lisa Hayden a most interesting young woman, and it was high time that Con should settle down. He himself had been married long before Con's age. Therefore, MacCarthy proceeded to draw forth Lisa's opinions on matrimony, the while he gently, suavely piqued her curiosity regarding his son Con, not by things that he said, but by things that he left unsaid. MacCarthy was accounted an astute man of affairs, gifted uncannily, his enemies asserted, with a capacity for reading the thoughts of others; and there were gleams in Lisa Hayden's fine eyes that tempted him to challenge her to an intellectual duel.

That either she or Con might have personal opinions on the subject never entered into his calculations. Young people, he assured himself, could be as easily directed in the way that they would not naturally go as men of affairs, if only one knew how to do it; and few young people knew how to think, or were gifted with cultivated reasoning powers, or, indeed, any amount of perspicacity, and most of them were incapable, therefore, of discerning efforts at direction. Con, for instance, was a perfect child, and still needed the paternal hand over him; if for nothing else, for advice.

It was with considerable surprise, then, that he observed Miss Hayden's manners at a game of auction bridge after dinner. She reasoned rapidly, he found, and saw situations almost before they disclosed themselves. She also exhibited knowledge of human kind; and she led MacCarthy up to the top of his bent, and then—took the odd trick.

MacCarthy was dealer in the first game, with a score of eighteen to twelve in his favor. Holding knave, ten, nine, eight of hearts; ace, queen, knave, seven, three of clubs; king, six of diamonds; and king, five of spades, he made a "no-trump" bid.

Lisa, second hand, held ace, king, queen of hearts; six, four of clubs; ace, ten, four of diamonds; and ace, ten, nine, six, four of spades, and bid "two diamonds."

The third player, holding seven, six, four of hearts; king, two of clubs; queen, knave, nine, eight, five of diamonds; and knave, seven, two of spades, "doubled."

Fourth player held five, three, two of hearts; ten, nine, eight, five of clubs; seven, three, two of diamonds; and queen, eight, three of spades, and said "No."

MacCarthy's "no-trump" bid placed Lisa in a predicament. The odd trick at that score meant game for him; but if she could force him to an increase, she might save the game. She held five sure tricks in her own hand. If, however, she should herself raise the no-trump bid, that might not serve her purpose, so she bid on this first round "two diamonds"; and third hand promptly doubled this, and fourth hand said "No."

When, on the second round, MacCarthy refused to bid, Lisa still hoping to force him higher, said "two hearts," deciding if that, too, should be doubled to resort to "two no-trumps." But third hand said "No," and so, also, did the fourth hand; but, on opening the third round, MacCarthy did just what Lisa had hoped that he would—he raised his bid to "two no-trumps," which Lisa at once doubled, a perfectly sound thing to do, considering her five sure tricks, which would, at least, restrict MacCarthy to his contract. But he lost—Lisa won the odd trick, and two hundred points were piled up against MacCarthy. As Lisa lifted her laughing eyes to his, he seemed to see something more there than that unspoken challenge—he wondered what?

"I'll take the odd trick next time," he assured her confidently; but there was no "next time" offered that evening; yet, as he said "good night," he repeated his assertion.

"Next time?" she asked, her eyes on his, her pretty head on one side, as she laughed up at him from under her brows, doubt upon her lips. "Perhaps."

MacCarthy, however, mentioned none of these circumstances, not even the fact that he had dined at the Haydens, or even that he had met Lisa Hayden, when he called Con into the library the following afternoon, as he saw him passing through the hall, and engaged him in a casual conversation on affairs of mutual interest. Mac-

Carthy had a way of being most casual when he was most deeply concerned, and sitting there in his library, Experience, as identified with himself, tried to turn the same old trick with Youth that has been tried ever since man acquired worldly knowledge.

Outside was the gay sunshine, an impalpable, ethereal atmosphere of expectancy, the throbbing pulse of the young year stirring kindling dreams, and hopes, and longings. The trees in the park opposite the MacCarthy home were weaving misty, green veils with which to clothe themselves, while wandering gusts of wind blew the sweet, dank earth odor about, spilling its perfume. Spring was making the earth over in the same old way, but adding touches of new embroidery in the latest fashion—this year's fashion, beloved of youth; and Daniel O'Connell MacCarthy was remembering and feeling this as he faced the parental eye.

The parental eye was cold, and steely, and commanding when its owner had a project to carry through, as it had this afternoon; yet, far back in it, and hidden from ordinary view, affection and admiration for this his only son rioted, for Con was a goodly youth, well made, if a trifle stockily built, as befits a man created for the open road, the winds of the world—anything but the shop, the banking house, the office, as any one, not blinded by paternal plans, might see.

He was the son of the wife who had been the sweetheart of MacCarthy's youth. She had died at the boy's birth, and no one had ever taken her place. When she died, MacCarthy had started out to play his game with the world, and had won on every count.

"I can overlook the loss of twenty thousand dollars in one year in allowing you to cut your eyeteeth on a coal proposition"—MacCarthy's dry, thin tones matched, in some strange way, his iron-gray aspect, his rather slight figure angularly erect in his stiff chair—"but I shall not consent to your going elsewhere. I expect you to stick it out here." Authority rang through the voice.

Con shook his head.

"I told you a year ago that I was not cut out for finance, and"—there was a whimsical self-disparagement in the youthful voice, a boyish perplexity on the youthful brow—"I think I've proved it. I want to take a try at something else."

MacCarthy looked up from under his eyebrows at his son sitting there in an easy-chair before him, folding back and forth in his hands his gloves, down-dropped between his knees.

"What do you propose to do?"

There was not the slightest flicker of interest suggested in the question; if anything, a shade of annoyance that he could feel Con to be on the wing, detached in some manner of thought from the subject in hand, and ready to flit at a moment's notice.

"I asked you to let me take the island farm and manage it, and you refused. Now, I have an offer from a man I know to go out West on a ranch with him. I can ride, as you are aware, and that's a diploma for that sort of thing." MacCarthy did not smile. Con's "riding" cost a pretty penny, as he well knew, if Con did not. "And before long I mean to have one for myself; that is, after I get the hang of things; or else I'll try the sea."

The easy confidence of youth rang through his words.

"Ah—yes." Not even the shadow of concern was in the elder man's voice. He was merely listening. Con suspected, the more determinedly to crush any individual aspirations that might clash with his own projects, for he had some project in hand just now, Con well knew, and meant to assert his own. "You're young to marry—too young, though I myself was married before I was your age. Young women, however, to-day are very raw and—young; not like they were when I married. They knew more about life then. Change, perhaps, if you like, a little travel." MacCarthy considered his carefully shaped finger nails. "I do not care to have you marry now. I am glad you have no one in mind."

Con's eyes were fixed upon the

pageant of spring over there in the park; there was a dreamy light in them. Spring and youth whispered in his ears, and he had a vision of a girl walking up from the other end of the busy town—a girl who had promised to meet him and walk with him that afternoon.

"But I have."

He turned and looked at his father; and not only his father, but the whole place suddenly seemed strange to him. He had voiced a thought that had been floating about in his mind for days; almost unconsciously he had committed himself, and he realized it with a pean of rapture in his heart. He had committed himself!

"Ah!" A virtuous patience with youth whispered through the exclamation. "Some one in your own sphere of life, I suppose?"

The manner of speech flicked Con like a whip; it was idle, even amused, and ironical, as if a grown man were being offered toys with which to while away time; and the younger man's eyes held those of his father. He wondered what his own sphere of life was, since that father had started out in life as a homeless cabin boy on an ore boat on the great lakes, and had worked himself up to captain of a boat, master of a fleet, owner of mines, steamship lines, railroads; all the things that gave him a finger in a hundred industries. "His own sphere of life!" A stubborn uncommunicativeness, coupled with a youthful contempt for a meaningless phrase, took possession of Con.

"I should say so," he replied, with a grin. "She's recently gone into business."

He knew his father's prejudices well. MacCarthy shook his head.

"It won't do."

Con's expression indicated an exaggerated indifference to any defiance of narrow conventionality. He looked his father straight in the eye, and his father, answering that look, felt a strange thrill. There was something in the younger MacCarthy's face that the elder involuntarily respected, though he still refused to consider it. Con's face, however, softened. He threw back his

head, and caught his breath with a gleaming smile; the vision of the girl coming to meet him was again before his eyes. He was about to tell his father something of her when MacCarthy's voice, like chilled steel, smote the silence.

"I want you to understand two or three things, Con. First, I expect you to stay here with me. I expect my son to step into the places I have made for him; to learn to take care of the money I have made for him, and to marry." There was a measured, slow precision about the words, and the vibrant, low voice bit into the thought of the listener like acid. "I expect you to marry with my consent, and a woman of whom I approve, and that is not a business woman of any kind. I have known many women in business, clever and interesting women, very—but—I have old-fashioned ideas. I do not like them as a class; they are, indeed, my pet aversion. I want a woman trained for the home, not the office or the shop. Those are not for my son; and if you marry one of them—you can look out for yourself."

Con gazed long at his father, and an obstinate line straightened out the curve in his lips, his eyes narrowed, a dull, red flush crept up into his face. Then he glanced hastily at his watch, nodded "good-by," hurried out into the hall, sprang down the marble steps of the great entrance way, and, squaring his shoulders with the precision of the athlete, went swinging down the avenue, where Spring was spinning her iridescent dreams and waiting to wrap her veils of illusion all about him.

He had forgotten his father's words as he elbowed his way through the crowds, looking far ahead of him with an inner joyousness of anticipation; but he was remembering his own disclosure, the words that had committed him, crystallized into form what he had always known since he had first met the girl, and he was thrilling with the thought, singing it under his breath, ringing it out in the very joy of walking toward her.

At a curve in the avenue, he caught sight of her ahead of him, and quick-

ened his swinging pace. She was all in brown, a slender, lithe figure of little more than medium height, as straight as an arrow, with a quaint, little fashion of twisting her head on one side to look up at you from under her bright eyes. She fell with a laughing light of welcome in her face into the stride that he set as he turned to walk back with her.

"Now, Miss Jenny Wren," he protested, as he glanced indulgently down upon her with a lyric note in his voice, "why didn't you spread those wings that you keep hidden under that little, brown coat and fly to me?"

"Does my coat fit so badly that you can see the wings under it?" she asked, in mock alarm. "Just take another look at the fit, will you?" She turned about a bit. "If it is bunchy in the back, I'll speak to my tailor, and"—there was a quick uplift to the long lashes lying on the bronze-red cheek—"the one with wings was not a bird, but a little god, and masculine, not feminine."

Con threw back his head and laughed in a low, pleased fashion, the lyric note again thrilling through his voice.

"Oh, you most amazing young person, what a gift you have for putting a man in the wrong—or the right, whichever you say. Now"—he sighed—"if you'd just take the elder MacCarthy in hand, why, I'd have some peace."

"What's the matter? Father a little difficult to manage? Oh, fie! They're the simplest things in the world. You're not a good disciplinarian. The iron hand in the velvet glove, you know."

"That's what I have on me now." Con grinned. "Only the velvet has slipped off. I feel the iron." He shook his big shoulders ruefully. "And"—here he looked down at the girl tripping along at his side like a flash of sunlight—"he says"—Con dropped his voice to a note of simulated horror—"that I am not to count business women among my friends, that they are his pet aversion. What do you think of that?"

"Now, I am sure that he is a very badly brought up father. I am surprised at you."

She shook her head mournfully.

"Let's go over there and sit down."

Con indicated a bench on the driveway through the park, the entrance to which was just opposite the MacCarthy home, by which they were then passing; and, sitting there, Con told her of his conversation with his father.

"He's got me married to a girl of his own choice." A whimsical little wrinkle ran across Con's nose. "But—Miss Jenny Wren—there's another girl who is my choice. Do you know who she is? Look at me!" imperatively.

Con caught his breath quickly. His voice, hoarse now, shook unsteadily. He leaned over and took the girl's hand. Youth lay between their eyes—youth and the spring.

"Oh, Miss Jenny Wren. Little Miss Jenny Wren—I—love you," he murmured. "You're my choice. Will you have me, Miss Jenny Wren?"

At the curb of the MacCarthy home a hurdy-gurdy was trilling out its repertoire of old-fashioned Italian opera airs—plaintive, sweet, they seemed to fill the day with whispers of romance. It was the only hand organ allowed in the neighborhood, and it played on sunny afternoons, undisturbed, in front of John MacCarthy's house—memories to him of a spring long dead. A girl in an Italian peasant costume tossed a tambourine with practiced fingers, a flash of color, a further touch of romance. Hauntingly sweet the music rang.

"And your father will have none of me?"

"Not as a business woman, Miss Jenny Wren. But," softly, "if you belong to me—" The lyric note was in Con's voice.

"And he will have none of you if I take you?"

"Not if you are in business, Miss Jenny Wren. He will have none of either you or me. He said so."

Con's eyes were fixed anxiously upon the girl, they seemed to hang on her very thought. He lifted her hand to his lips.

"What will we do?" she asked.

"What will we do?" he repeated. "Do just what he did when he got the

woman that he loved best in all the world. I'll make my living, and yours, too—yours, too—Miss Jenny Wren—sweetest Miss Jenny Wren. Don't you know that? Are you afraid?"

She shook her head in a positive denial, sighed in a pleased, contented fashion.

They sat there a few moments, neither of them speaking—two young things facing life. It was a big world—a great big world, and Con had never taken any steps in it alone. But, ah, give him his chance! Miss Jenny Wren smiled happily.

"I am going to bully some man into letting me manage a farm for him somewhere down on the island—put up my cheek as an asset." He tapped his face as he laughed happily.

The light sprang up into the girl's eyes, the glory of admiring young love was in her face. She caught her breath. The world seemed to shine with beauty, to be very perfect, as perfect as the day.

"And he won't have either of us if I am a business woman?" she asked again.

Con shook his head with a positive negative.

"Then I'll take you, Con," she whispered.

Across the street, the hand organ trilled out its old-fashioned airs—sweet, plaintively sweet. Romance whispered, and spring spun her iridescent dreams, and flung her veils of illusion across lovers' eyes. The peasant girl tossed her tambourine in the sunshine.

"To hear father speak sometimes," complained Con, after a while, "you'd imagine he has no heart; and yet, he allows, even encourages that lazy organ grinder and that fat girl with heavy fees, and why—"

"Why?" whispered the girl, as she slipped her hand into Con's. "Why?" Somehow the music sent one's tears near to one's eyes.

"When he was young, mother, who had a beautiful voice, was crazy to go to Italy. He has told me of their struggles to save enough for them both to go most modestly. It was early days, you know, before he had made a fortune.

They did go, and mother heard that opera in Milan."

"He must have loved her very much"—the girl's voice was hushed—"to have remembered all of these years."

"That's the only way that I know his heart is not made of dollar bills." Con's laugh was short and bitter.

"Let's go over there and talk to that tambourine girl," she suggested by way of diverting his thoughts. "I like to know about other people's lives. Her life is not all sunshine and tossing a tambourine, I know. And, Con"—she stood up, her eyes brilliant and confident, the flame in her cheeks, the youth that crowned her head making her look like a theme of spring for poets and painters—"I'll wager that your father will yet urge you to marry me."

Con drank in her sweet loveliness, but he shook his head.

"I'm to marry some girl he has already picked out for me—at least, I so understood from the way he put it. I see myself," disgustedly. "And it means no end of a fight, I know, with him. He never gives up."

"Let's forget it," she consoled.

They moved away slowly. Something of the spring's bright day seemed to go with them. Something of the elusive, haunting, sweet sadness that is in youth and music with memories.

It was that same evening, when MacCarthy announced to Con, quite as if he had forgotten their talk of the afternoon, that he was expecting guests the next night for dinner, and would look for his son's presence. The guests were to be Peter Hayden, an associate, as Con knew, on many directories, and interested in the fruitage of finance as was MacCarthy. Peter Hayden and—his daughter.

Con stared. He caught his breath. Peter Hayden's daughter. His wondering, surprised expression grew to a slow grin, a comprehending grin. He would be delighted to be on hand, he assured his father, and MacCarthy expressed approval of this filial attitude.

Con was, in truth, on hand that next night. He was waiting in the dull, splendid hall, rich with the loot of many

lands, long before the hour for the arrival of his father's guests. When Lisa Hayden had laid aside her wraps, he caught her hand in his own, and whispered excitedly in her ear:

"It's you, Miss Jenny Wren, that I'm to have. You! Turn around here and let me look at the wings. Just to think that you used those wings of yours to fly to me, Miss Jenny Wren!" He laughed a low, pleased note, a lyric note of joy. "You've won your wager, I know, and I'll pay here in my own home, sweetest Miss Jenny Wren. Kiss me."

He drew her into the shadow of a curtain.

Lisa Hayden charmed John MacCarthy that night, as why should she not? She looked like a flower, a half-blown bud. She wore a pink gown, a soft, lovely pink, veiled in clouds of yellow chiffon, and with her dark head upraised happily, and her eyes shining like stars, she had homage enough from three men to last a lifetime. Just before she left the table, however, she turned to her host, and said:

"Mr. MacCarthy, I want you to promise to order all of your flowers at my shop. I've gone into business. I've opened a flower shop."

She smiled across at Peter Hayden, who nodded, as if punctuating her assertion with personal pride. Then her voice sounded a lyric note, the same note that rang through Con's when he greeted her that evening. It was low and very sweet, and Lisa dropped her eyes under Con's adoring gaze.

"I'm taking a partner into business with me; a man—to manage my flower farms; and the firm name is to be Hayden and—MacCarthy. And, Mr. MacCarthy"—ah, the rushing hurry of her words, the lovely light in her eyes, that sent its radiance across and transfigured Con's countenance—"I want to tell you that I've taken the odd trick again. I've taken Con."

John MacCarthy leaned over and took her hand, and lifted it to his lips.

"You are mistaken, Miss Lisa Hayden. 'Tis I who have taken the odd trick. I've secured you."

THE MIRROR ON THE WALL



By FANNIE HEASLIP LEA

 T was all over in an instant. The treacherous mirror at the farther end of the drawing-room held in its shifting fire-lit depths, for the space of a breath, a man's dark face, the back of a girl's blond head. The face leaned down, and the head did not draw back. Obviously lips met. Then the fire flare sank.

To Glenn, who had been leisurely divesting himself of hat and coat in the pleasant twilight of the hall, the significance of the thing was at once cruelly apparent. He stood rigid a moment, considering feasible exits, and in that moment his cane slipped from the rack, thudding softly upon the floor. Within the drawing-room ensued, in unquestionable sequence, a whisper of skirts, faint, sharp clicking of heels, and silence somewhat strained.

Presently, having waited a decent interval, Glenn crossed the hall. At his appearance the man who stood by the fire, elbow on the mantelshelf, turned, rather too quickly for absolute naturalness, and smiled. There was no one else in the room.

"Oh, hello, Tommy!" he said. "Didn't know you were back."

"How are you, O'Brien?" said Glenn. O'Brien felt for his cigarettes, offered them, accepted refusal with a shrug, and lit one himself. The flare of the match threw his face into sharp relief, touched the fine eyes with a hint of mockery, and shadowed the full-lipped humor of his mouth. A deep

dimple showed incongruously effeminate in the lean brownness of his left cheek.

"Still raining outside?" he inquired, polite abstraction veiling a vivid uneasiness. "Rotten weather! Paula know you're here?"

Glenn thrust one hand into his trousers pocket; with the other he carefully displaced and rearranged certain small objects upon the table that stood in the center of the room.

"Yes," he said, after a period of consideration, in which the other regarded him with controlled weariness, "it's still raining."

"Dare say she'll be down presently," O'Brien continued. "She's gone upstairs for a book we were discussing. How's business? By the way—thought some one told me you were in the East?"

"Business," said Glenn, "is much as usual, thank you."

"It was Paula, come to think of it, who told me. Does she know you're back?"

"It was probably Paula," said Glenn. O'Brien turned his cigarette about, observing it with critical interest. He shifted his position slightly, suppressing a yawn that fell barely short of conviction.

"Nice trip?"

"Very decent."

"Anything new at the theaters?"

"Nothing to speak of."

"Rotten weather here."

"Yes," said Glenn, once more, "still raining."

There was a silence. The fire made small, cheerful noises, and the mirror on the wall reflected warm shadows.

There was a bowl of roses upon the table, loose-petaled, large, white roses, with a stain of pink at the heart. They diffused in the warmth of the room a vague, alluring perfume, suggestive not so much of gardens as of flower shops—a sophisticated perfume, having a flavor of wet fern. While the two men eyed each other steadily, one of the roses fell, in a whisper of butterfly leaves, upon the shining dark wood of the table.

"Really," O'Brien suggested coolly, "hadn't you better let Paula know you're here?"

"Thanks—it isn't necessary."

"Think the maid will have told her?"

There was a substratum of insistence in O'Brien's tone. He flung his cigarette into the fire, half smoked.

"The maid," said Glenn quietly, "gave me to understand that"—the barest possible hiatus—"Miss Summers was at home."

"Oh, yes—she'll be jolly glad to see you."

"That's very good of you," said Glenn, the words quite colorless.

"Not at all," rejoined O'Brien, with cheerful impudence. A smile broke over his face, lighting it to an irresistible youngness.

"The penalty of announcing yourself," he went on airily. "You cool your heels waiting, and no one knows you're here—eh?"

"I fancy you knew it," said Glenn.

His hand clenched in his trousers pocket was slightly cold, but he spoke with immobile deliberation.

"Oh—I—" O'Brien hesitated sharply; then, almost before the hesitation had declared itself: "Paula'd like to know, I fancy."

"That's very good of you," said Glenn again. With his left hand he turned the leaves of a book that lay on the table. "Damn good!" he added evenly, without looking up.

"What d'you mean?" demanded O'Brien hotly.

There was a little cry from the door-

way. Against the shadows a white-gowned figure glimmered luminously, poised for a moment upon the threshold, and came swiftly into the firelight, both pretty hands outstretched.

"Tommy! You said to-morrow! How long have you been here? Why didn't some one call me? Why—"

"How are you, Paula?" Glenn interrupted coolly. "I got back a day earlier than I expected—or was expected. You're looking very fit."

Something in his quiet voice arrested sharply the frankness of the girl's welcome. She hesitated, teeth on the soft under lip, looking from one man to the other with wide gray eyes, over which a shadow of trouble fell swiftly. A flush-roased her delicate cheeks.

"Thanks, Tommy," she said, a little awkwardly. "I—I'm feeling very fit, too. Do sit down. If I'd known you were here I shouldn't have kept you waiting. I was upstairs. I— Oh, here's the book, Lawrence."

Before Glenn's unsmiling neutrality, she turned at last to O'Brien with a little stammer of relief.

"Oh, the book!" said O'Brien significantly.

He took it from her, whirling the leaves with a quick, careless hand, and an indifferent look. After a second he turned on Glenn a smiling challenge:

"Like to see it? The Vedder edition of Omar."

"Tommy gave it to me," Paula interposed quickly. She smiled at Glenn, a trifle wistfully. "Remember, Tommy? Last Christmas."

"I remember," said Glenn, with no answering softness of eye or lip.

O'Brien laid the book down, as if its service had been accomplished.

"Nice work," he commented lightly.

Glenn said nothing at all, the muscles of chin and jaw tightening a little for the grip on his silence.

"I'm very fond of it," said Paula.

She lifted the book again from the table, and opened it nervously. The tension of Glenn's manner was not to be escaped, nor the slightly insolent defiance of O'Brien's smile. She looked

from one to the other again, lifting her head rather proudly.

"Of course, any edition of Omar is better than none at all, but this one—it's so exquisitely appropriate. All of Vedder's things—the line is so wonderful—"

Her voice faltered and stopped. Neither man spoke. The fire sputtered prosaically.

"What is it?" she demanded suddenly, distressfully. "What is wrong? Have you been quarreling, you two? Tommy, you should have let me know you were here. I know you and Lawrence are ancient enemies, and yet"—she finished bravely—"you're both fond of me. You might at least refrain from spilling each other's gore on my hearthrug."

"My dear girl," said O'Brien easily, "so far as I am concerned, your hearthrug has been kept unsotted from the world."

"There's thunder in the air," insisted Paula.

She smiled at Glenn with a winning uncertainty.

"You, Tommy? Have you been disturbing the peace? What have you to say for yourself?"

Glenn returned her look deeply. His eyes questioned with a merciless intensity—questioned and accused.

"I fancy," he answered, at length, "it's not I who have something to say."

From his old position by the mantelshelf, O'Brien murmured gracelessly:

"The time has come, the walrus said,
To talk of many things."

"Lawrence! Don't be silly!" said Paula. She added, with a little gesture of deprecation: "I don't, in the least, know what you mean, Tommy."

"Do you care to discuss it?" asked Glenn restrainedly. "Here? And now?"

"She does not," said O'Brien suddenly, "if she will permit me to answer for her."

"And she does not," Paula supplemented, at once, "permit you to answer for her. What is it, Tommy? Why shouldn't we discuss it, whatever it is?"

Glenn looked at her in silence. His

mouth twisted grimly. The strain he had set upon himself began to tell. His hand closed upon the back of a chair.

With a shrug and a grimace, O'Brien denied the tension of the moment.

"My dear fellow," he said pleasantly, "why be an ass?"

"Lawrence!" cried Paula sharply.

Another of the roses fell with a little, silken splash upon the table, a heap of drifting petals.

Glenn selected one of the cupped white leaves with a certain amount of care, torturing it between strong, nervous fingers. He spoke with deliberate clearness:

"An ass, possibly, but an enlightened one. I happened to be taking off my coat in the hall—"

Paula frowned uncomprehendingly.

"Of course, the maid should have told me, Tommy; still—"

"It might have saved explanation," said Glenn.

While Paula spoke, O'Brien's eyes had fallen quite casually upon the mirror on the wall. It reflected now Paula's face and the back of Glenn's head. O'Brien looked swiftly from mirror to hall, and back. A smile of lightning understanding touched his lips.

"As through a glass darkly," he remarked, with a certain detached clearness. His words fell on fertile soil.

Paula only waved him aside with a little, impatient gesture; but Glenn swung on him with a curt: "Exactly!"

"Ah!" mused O'Brien. "That was unfortunate."

"Exactly what?" said Paula. "Exactly what, Tommy?" She laid one hand on Glenn's arm. Her voice deepened and quivered. "I wish very much to know what it is that you speak of—you and Lawrence. It is quite obvious that something has happened."

"Quite obvious!" said Glenn.

"Then, what?" she urged painfully. "I insist upon knowing."

Glenn looked at her curiously.

"I should not have thought you would insist," he suggested.

"What a brute you are, Tommy," said O'Brien suddenly. "My dear Paula, our gentle friend here thinks he saw me kiss

you about half an hour ago—while he was removing his coat in the hall."

"Oh!" said Paula breathlessly. "Oh, Tommy!"

The blood swept across her face, receded, and left it colorless. The gray eyes widened in horror.

"Oh, Tommy!" said Paula again.

O'Brien thrust both hands into his trousers pockets. A savage mockery informed the glance he flung in the other man's direction.

"I trust," he offered, with elaborate courtesy, "that I have correctly interpreted your behavior?"

"Quite correctly!" said Glenn, cold fury in every syllable. "I may add that I have the right to demand an explanation."

"If you please!" cried Paula proudly.

She flung out her slim left hand with a diamond winking whitely upon the third finger.

"Lawrence knows."

"Which renders his action, if anything, a trifle more contemptible," said Glenn.

There was a silence in which O'Brien started angrily to speak, bit his lip, and turned aside with a shrug. Paula linked her two hands before her, and lifted her eyes to Glenn's set face.

"You think that?" she asked carefully. "Of me, Tommy?"

"I saw," said Glenn heavily and unhappily.

O'Brien spoke swiftly across the words:

"You saw nothing of the sort!"

"That," said Paula, "is one of the things which should have gone without saying. Be quiet, Lawrence!"

She stood very quiet herself between the two men; but, like the white roses in the bowl upon the table, each soft cheek wore a deepening stain of pink.

"You were taking off your coat in the hall," she said clearly. "The maid had not told me you were here."

"I had some idea of surprising you," Glenn conceded stoically.

Over the lighting of a fresh cigarette, O'Brien suppressed a whimsical chuckle and a light-hearted pleasantry.

"The biter bit."

Glenn flung him a savage glance, but Paula scarcely heard. Her eyes were very steady on Glenn's face.

"And you thought you saw—from the hall—"

"The mirror," he said unwillingly.

He offered no further explanation, standing stiffly tall, one hand still shifting and rearranging the things upon the table.

"I see," said Paula slowly.

She looked at the mirror in silence. It gave back her own lovely face and the back of Glenn's head. Then, like O'Brien, she looked from the mirror to the doorway that opened into the hall. From that her glance traveled to another door and the dusky library beyond it, rested a moment in the shadowy depths of that other room, and came back to the singing fire.

"Will you please sit down," she said, "both of you? I have something to say."

"My dear girl," began O'Brien lightly, yet with an undercurrent of warmth.

Paula interrupted him with a slight movement of one hand.

"Wait!"

Presently she sat down herself in a chair beside the table, and folded her hands in her lap.

"Since you are both concerned in this," she said, "I should like you both to listen." Then she took off the big white diamond, and laid it delicately upon the table. "I do not believe," she said, "that I care to wear your ring any longer, Tommy."

"And I," said Glenn, "do not want it." He added blindly, out of his exceeding hurt: "The wonder is that you have cared to wear it so long."

"Are you quite sure," O'Brien suggested easily at this point, from his chair at the left of the hearth, "that you wish me to stay, Paula?"

"Quite sure," said Paula at once. Her eyes burned for a moment upon his keen, dark face. "Quite sure, because I wish you now to tell Tommy whom it was he saw you kiss."

"I have no desire to hear him say it," Glenn interposed harshly.

"Nevertheless," said Paula, "I wish it, Lawrence."

O'Brien flicked an imaginary ash from his cigarette. He frowned, and stared into the fire.

"It's impossible," he decided.

"Is this—farce—necessary?" the other man demanded heavily. His suffering showed itself upon his face.

"You refuse, Lawrence?" asked Paula.

"Don't ask me, Paula."

"I do ask you!"

"Then—yes, I refuse."

Paula clasped her hands about her knees, and looked into the fire in her turn.

"Thank you," she said softly. "Thank you, Lawrence! Tommy here has pretended to care for me—that's all done for now. But I've known *you* all my life. I fancied I might at least ask a service of your friendship. Very well then—"

"If Glenn isn't man enough," O'Brien broke in hotly, "to believe in you without explanations, if he doesn't know you well enough to know you're incapable of such—"

"We'll leave how much of a man I am out of it," said Glenn. He had himself well in hand, but his voice was husky. "I decline to recognize you, O'Brien, as judge of a man. Further—"

"Thank you, Lawrence. Thank you very much," Paula interposed carefully. "If you do not wish to tell I think there is really nothing else for you to say—nothing worth while, that is."

She stood up, loosening a fold of her skirt from the carving of the chair that held it. She had the air of one dismissing an audience, but imperceptibly the soft mouth trembled.

O'Brien hesitated frankly, threw his cigarette into the fire, and turned with a flush of sudden impulse.

"But there is! This is all rot, you know, for you two, who really care, to—"

"If you please!" cried Paula proudly.

"Who really care," persisted O'Brien, "to smash things like this for a reason that never existed. It's ghastly! I

can't, in common decency, tell what you ask of me, Paula—but, see here, Glenn! Don't, for the Lord's sake, be an ass! You can't possibly believe, man—"

"Drop it, O'Brien!" said Glenn curtly.

O'Brien frowned again, and shrugged.

"Sorry," he said. "I won't insult Paula by swearing it wasn't she you saw."

"I think," said the girl suddenly, "that you have both insulted Paula sufficiently." She smiled rather a pitiful little smile, curving the lips, but falling short of the sweet gray eyes. "Will you take your ring, Tommy? I don't think I want to talk about it any more."

When Glenn had picked up the ring and dropped it into his pocket she smiled both men out of the room impartially. Glenn went clumsily; O'Brien, after a phrase of apology, picking his way among the furniture with a high-headed carefulness.

Their footsteps echoed presently down the hall, no words accompanying the sound.

When a faint slam of a door proclaimed a final exodus, Paula crossed the room and stood on the threshold of the library, a slim white figure against the shadows.

"Come out," she said evenly. "Come out, Gay."

Then she went back to the fire without waiting. Presently a second slim figure detached itself from the haven of a big chair among the bookcases, and followed her.

"How did you know I was there?" demanded the newcomer curiously.

There was not a shade of regret or embarrassment upon the piquant face. The red, thin lips tilted at the corners as at some mirth-provoking memory.

"When I looked in I saw your white skirt," said Paula tiredly. She added, after a careful moment: "It was you he kissed?"

"I'm terribly sorry—about Tommy."

"Don't trouble yourself! How long had I been upstairs when you came in?"

"Oh, probably just a second or two. I left my things in the hall, and went

into the drawing-room. Larry was there—he's frightfully indiscreet."

"So it would seem. And Tommy came into the hall?"

"Without the least warning—stupid trick! We heard him drop something on the floor."

"So you hid?"

"Ducked," Gay supplemented, with a little wry face of amusement. "Rather! Think I was going to be caught kissing my young man—like the housemaid with the grocer's boy?"

"I don't know," said Paula tonelessly, "that I find your method an improvement."

Gay only smiled, and shrugged in an obvious reflection of O'Brien's manner.

"Are you going to marry him?"

"We're engaged," admitted the younger sister, but added at once, with a droll, swift twisting of the lower lip: "Not that it follows, necessarily."

"I supposed that if you were engaged he might have told," said Paula. She drew a long, careful breath. "That was why I gave him a chance."

"Well, if Tommy Glenn hasn't faith enough in you——"

Even Gay's bright, careless eyes fell before the suffering in her sister's look, but she thrust on recklessly:

"I think you're well rid of him, myself."

"Do you?" asked Paula quietly.

She sat down in the chair that Glenn had used.

"I suppose I could have come out; but you had already given him back the ring. Besides—he's no idea I'm home now, has he? I dare say he thinks I'm still at Aunt Laura's. And, after all, it wasn't so much what really happened as the fact that he could believe it of you—eh?"

"Will you please go away?" said Paula suddenly. "I'm very nearly at the end of my endurance, Gay."

Gay went, with a grimace of humorous protest.

"You'll be glad of it later on," she predicted from the doorway. "Don't you care, Ducky!"

"Will you please," said Paula desperately, "go away?"

When Gay had gone she leaned back in the big chair, and lifted her left hand against the firelight. Once she touched the third finger blindly, caressingly, with the fingers of her right hand. Where the ring had been was a queer, unhappy lack. Her eyes, fixed on the fire, held no tears; but the lids drooped heavily. She did not stir at the sound of a step in the hall, and, after a moment, she controlled her voice to an even calm:

"I shan't want the lights yet, Norah."

"It's Mr. Glenn, ma'am," said the maid from the doorway. "He said you'd see him."

"Ask Mr. Glenn to come in," said Paula, still quite steadily. She rose and stood by the table, waiting.

Glenn crossed the floor to her swiftly.

"I had to come back," he explained. His voice showed an unaccustomed hoarseness.

"Ah?" said Paula. She smiled fleetingly. "You forgot something?"

Glenn reddened slowly from forehead to chin—the hot, distressful blush of a reticent man.

"No," he answered. "No—not that. I had to see you again."

He stopped and looked at her, searching for words.

"I fancied," said Paula, not returning his look, "you might have seen almost enough of me—for one day."

"Don't!" said Glenn imploringly. "For God's sake—Paula!"

Paula said nothing. In the silence that followed she set her teeth deftly and fiercely upon her lower lip, but she kept her head turned proudly aside, steadying herself against the table with one small, shaking hand.

The rose light of the fire played tenderly upon her face, upon her soft, pale hair, and the warm whiteness of her gown. The rose scent of the flowers on the table climbed to Glenn's nostrils, and made him mad.

"Paula!" he said hoarsely. "Paula!"

"Yes?" said Paula. She trusted herself with one word only.

"I've come back," said Glenn, "to see if I've killed—everything—between

us. I can't go like this. It's no use! If you'll just say you care, what I saw will make no difference. If you'll say it was against your will I'll believe you. This nightmare can't last! I've been counting the hours this last week. It's not possible that our whole—our whole love should be a lie—you can't break what's been between us—like a rotten stick—Paula!"

She put up both hands, palms outward, with a desperate, breathless gesture, when he would have touched her.

"You believe he kissed me?"

"I saw him!" said Glenn.

Paula caught her breath in a shaken laugh that was more than half a sob.

"Yet you—yet you go on caring?"

"I've got to!" said the man simply. "It's no use. I saw him, but I want you to tell me it was not your wish, Paula. I will believe what you tell me—absolutely."

Paula turned a white, impassioned face upon him. Her eyes shone deeply.

"Suppose I tell you—it was not I?"

She came nearer to him, and at the first shy touch of her hand his arms went round her strongly.

"Oh, what difference does it make," she sobbed against his shoulder, "*whom* he kissed—if you could believe it of *me*?"

Glenn wrestled mightily with his reason, and overcame it. He spoke with his lips against her cheek.

"Say it wasn't you—I'll believe you!"

But she said nothing, whereupon Glenn accomplished a final victory upon himself.

"It was *not* you," he said slowly. "Well?"

She lifted her face to be kissed.

Some minutes, or ages, or aeons later a voice, treble and mirthful, yet guarded, floated in to them from the hall. The drawing-room was—and had been—very still.

"Hello!" said the voice. "Hello! That you, Larry?"

And presently:

"Nice mess you've made—I told you—"

A long, long silence.

"I certainly shan't—and neither shall you!"

A briefer hiatus.

"Oh, dear, no—a man who could suspect—"

Apparent protestations cut short.

"I don't in the least feel it's my fault. I told you some one would see us—What? I can't—now. I'm in a hurry. I've something on, to-night—ring me up—to-morrow. Yes—yes—of course! Don't be silly! Good-by."

Silence stiller yet, and footsteps on the stairs.

"Gay!" said Glenn, a curt and stricken syllable. He added huskily, after a long, shamed moment: "You can forgive me?"

Paula smiled. A tear slipped down the cheek that rested against Glenn's sleeve—it was a hot tear, and a large one.

"Oh, yes," she said, "I can forgive you." But it was the mother of Paula, and the grandmother, and the great-grandmother, raised to the *n*th degree, who spoke through that shaken whisper.



INSINCERITY

NOT frequently can poets strike
The lyre to strains precisely true;
To rhyme we "love" when but to "like"
Was all we ever meant to do!

JULIA DITTO YOUNG.



AS Myron Henning put down his dainty gilt coffee cup carefully on the edge of the tray nearest him he smiled again; the professional man's pleased, polite smile at his erstwhile client, who was reiterating gratitude.

"You should be perfectly happy, Mrs. Castle, if the old adage be true—that it is woman's joy to have her will with man. You have certainly had yours in this matter from the very first. No countersuit, no opposition to the divorce—"

"Except at the very first, of course, when I first told him," she said hastily; then wondered why she had said it.

"To be sure. I remember that there was some slight argument—protest perhaps I might call it."

"But you removed that at once, I know."

Again Blanche Castle was annoyed at herself for a fidgety interruption which was without motive.

"In our first interview, as you will remember, I told you at the time that I have never had less trouble with a refractory husband. Even the professional diplomacy of my caste was hardly necessary in Mr. Castle's instance. I made plain to him your intents, purposes, and desires—and your evidence. Though I recall, as a matter of fact, that it was not the evidence which had weight with him. Indeed, for a moment, it rather inclined him to retaliatory measures."

"He had none to use! None!" she cried. "He knew nothing—"

"Surely not, dear lady." Mr. Henning spoke soothingly. "Had there been such in existence he would have used them to force you to take a smaller settlement. Fortunately he had nothing to advance which could in any way retard your case or hamper you in the speedy realization of your desire for freedom. And—the alimony is most satisfactory."

"Why do they call it alimony? I hate the word!"

Myron Henning laughed indulgently.

"My dear lady, we must have names for these things. And out of my sixteen years of legal experience—in which I have given special attention to divorce suits—I can assure you that even woman's fine invention can compose no pleasanter obligato to the soprano solo than alimony."

The lawyer's rich voice caressed this witticism with the familiarity of an old friend. Blanche Castle moved uneasily in her chair; her words came sharply.

"I did not know that you were musical, Mr. Henning."

"Well, well, it *has* been a nervous time for you, dear lady," he said gently, excusing her tone of voice to himself. "I can only congratulate you on the ease and dispatch which have been possible in your case; partly owing to my experience in such matters, I believe, but partly owing, also, to Mr. Castle, who so willingly facilitated your action by making no defense. We have been highly successful, highly successful. No opposition, excellent alimony, no publicity. And how speedy, too! Not a

single delay; practically an instantaneous decision. That was because I managed to get the case before Wilcox. An able mind, Wilcox, and indebted to me, and, I may say, loves to cut the marital knot whenever he can. His epigrams on the 'Money Twins,' as he calls the 'Mat-Ri-Money and Al-I-Money,' are excellent club merriment, though less suitable, perhaps, for your parlor, and—"

"Yes—yes—it has been speedy. A matter of a few hours—days. I cannot thank you enough for driving out to tell me as soon as possible after the decision. I—er—don't go for a moment, Mr. Henning," as the lawyer rose, after a glance at the clock. "There is a question I'd like to ask you. I suppose it will sound very silly—still—just because you *are* a lawyer and familiar with—with—the Money Twins—as Judge Wilcox so cleverly puts it—I want to ask you—what do you think of divorce?"

"That it is the only cure for marriage except death. And for my part, were I a sepsive woman, I should prefer alimony to life insurance." His white teeth gleamed through his mustache.

Blanche Castle looked at him for some moments in grave silence, then she said:

"I don't mean what do you think of it *epigrammatically*; but, say, as a lawyer?"

"Ah! To a lawyer it is almost a religious conviction; sacred, like appendicitis to a surgeon: Think what we owe to it!" He laughed agreeably.

"You must answer me, Mr. Henning. As a *man*, what is your opinion of divorce?"

"As a man—h'm. My dear Mrs. Castle, one's views on divorce inevitably involve one's views on marriage. I consider marriage a business partnership for the furtherance of happiness and the promotion of success, for mutual enjoyments without censure, for the safeguarding of offspring—and so on. It comprises more than the average business coalition because of the emotions; but that fact cannot justly,

be urged as a reason why marriage should be any more binding than any other business agreement. It is in the nature of woman to allure and of man to stray. Marriage is an ambitious but mistaken attempt to harness Niagara. And divorce is Nature's answer to it."

His facile laugh rippled richly over his well-turned phrase.

"I see. Then unity and fidelity—'the twain shall be one'—is all moonshine? In every case it is only a mistaken ideal, a pretty lie? Is it not founded on Nature's laws at all?"

"Not at all. Haven't you proved it so? Hasn't Castle? Another woman lured. He strayed. You divorced him. He is free to stray, as you to lure—"

"Oh, no!" she broke in sharply.

"Wise woman lures *under the law*, dear lady. You will remarry. If Castle is wise, he will not. Love is charming—glamourised instinct; and it is an instinct not for unity, but for diffusion. Woman's need is protection, and man's freedom. How can there be unity of such opposites? I say, let us have no illusions and we will have no scandals! Let us be discreet, decent. And I should say to you, dear Mrs. Castle, when you marry again pursue a different plan. See nothing that is not meant for your eyes. Divorce is the sovereign panacea for wedde'l woes, but"—Mr. Henning laughed softly through the pause—"it should not become a *habit*. And now, good evening—and good-by, since you leave so soon for the South. Mutual congratulations befit us. It has been a perfectly managed affair, wholly decorous. I leave you with assurances of my good will and with my best wishes for a new and happier—"

"Thank you—thank you." Her voice rasped her own ears so that she paused a moment for control. "I am extremely grateful to you. You have been most kind. Good night, Mr. Henning, good night."

Blanche Castle's first thought after her attorney's departure was in the nature of a hope that he had not taken her irritability personally. He was probably accustomed to such moods in his clients, she argued. She had heard him say that

divorce was a "nervous business." Of course it was just her nerves, the strain of the last few weeks, which made her feel such an unreasoning dislike for good, kind Mr. Henning. Still, Blanche wondered if all lawyers who made a specialty of divorce suits were so smugly conceited over their ability to disrupt marriages as was Myron H. Henning, or as pleasantly facetious when the deed was done.

Why not, if they all held the same philosophy regarding marriage? What had he called it? "An attempt to harness Niagara." And divorce "Nature's answer" to it. "Woman's sex needs protection—man's freedom. How can there be union into one flesh of such opposites?"

Yet he had advised her to marry again; and had said that if Sidney Castle were wise he would *not* marry again. What an absurd contradiction! How were women to marry if men did not marry? But, of course, this was all childishly illogical on her part; it was an utterly unreasonable and wholly ungrateful desire to find fault with Mr. Henning, with good and kind and brilliant Mr. Henning, who had so swiftly, deftly, and suavely taken Sidney Castle out of her life. What the clever lawyer had meant was that she should marry again with her eyes open—and then shut them, and make "secrecy" the motto of her own conduct. In short, she must learn from her first divorce how not to have another. And the first lesson was "no illusions." "No illusions, no scandals."

Could her experience contradict his philosophy? Had she found love to be more than "glamourized instinct"? It would seem not; for here was she what is vulgarly termed a "grass widow," with her widower's full consent, after half a dozen years of marriage, which had begun with the strongest convictions of unity. She and Sidney Castle had had the same aims, the same love, and the same faith in it. It might be true that woman's need was protection, and man's freedom; but she and Sidney Castle had not leaped to each other as two waters to one flowing, because she

wanted "protection," and he "freedom." No, they had wanted each other. Their "need" had been union, indissoluble union, with each other. Was divorce "Nature's answer" to *that*? Mr. Henning, legal hero of a hundred marital wars, would undoubtedly say that it was; and, by the way of conclusion, would voice again that boresome fallacy regarding the essentially different natures and emotional needs of men and women.

Face to face with herself alone, Blanche Castle could declare frankly and fearlessly that her whole marital experience disproved the world's contention. There had been *no* difference between herself and Sidney Castle in their attraction to each other. Nay, passion itself had disproved the world's fallacy about it. First, in theirs for each other; second, in the fact known to herself only and unsuspected by Mr. Henning or Sidney Castle, that when the husband had strayed the wife had followed suit. Difference! She and Sidney Castle were one being in this matter, and they had one history, and that in the face of the whole world's lie!

Why had they made such a mess of things? Blanche could not see just why; unless it was that prosperity had come too quickly, and with it a rush of pleasures and excitements which engulfed both, but which they could not rightly be said to share together, because there was no substance in them to be shared.

Sid learned to take an interest in many and mixed drinks; so did she, in lesser degree, however. He graduated rather swiftly to the cocktail-and-cigarette-before-breakfast stage, and, not surprisingly, acquired the glazed eye to which more than one woman appears desirable. Blanche paralleled his experience by the acquisition of tender nerves and luxurious habits on which to cushion them, and a hysterical sensitiveness whenever they were interfered with.

She was opulent in personal charm, she dressed well—as their fortunes advanced, extravagantly—and surely it

would have been a waste of Paris matters to have used such costly gowns to charm only her husband. As with most Madames Newly Rich, to Blanche's ears the price of her clothes shrieked for victims.

So swiftly had the Castles been borne on by the broad tide that they had lost sight of each other, their union, their common aim. They followed the glamour of speed and the lure of self-pleasures, and their course bred appetites which grew fast and rankly, and turned upon them, and intruded into the oneness of their passion.

In the last year—the third year of their swift going—Blanche Castle had had two experiences fraught with anguish. The first was when she discovered that Sidney Castle was not true to her; the second was when she discovered that she was not true to Sidney Castle. In the first she merely suffered. In the second she suffered and hated. Inwardly she turned like a tearing Fury on Sidney Castle, who had made her fall possible through his own. What sort of a thing was this husband, who left the door to his wife unguarded, who roved gayly and tipsily about other pastures, where admittedly he could find nothing of great preciousness to him, while the home, the name, the honor, the woman, which were his, were offered, through his negligence, to the lustful marauder?

What a drift of ashes! Love, passion, unity, honor, decency, all burned to gray dust.

One day recently she had hurled the names of women at him, and told him that she would divorce him. He had protested, threatened, shaken with anger and the shock of her decision. She had sent him to Mr. Henning, and Mr. Henning had convinced him that he had better accede to her desire to be rid of him. He had agreed to all her demands, and, according to gossip, had not drawn a sober breath since he left Henning's office.

Well, he was no concern of hers now. She was divorced from him. The law had parted them finally and forever. She was free to live as she chose—free

to marry again! Was this the whole of life and love, after all? To go on—as she and Sid had gone for two years—with some other man, and learn from this experience how to keep out of the divorce court and the newspapers?

A gust of rage swept over her and shook her helplessly. She hated the suave attorney of numerous divorce suits whose experience had enabled him to come—affable, smiling, diplomatic, serenely sure—into the ugly, evil, but none the less poignant, tragedy of her married life; who had been able, by the training of his caste, to persuade Sidney Castle into instantly relinquishing her; who had cleverly brought her suit before an indebted friend, a judge who made club jokes about the "Money Twins," and who—

The telephone rang sharply.

Blanche Castle's nervous hand knocked the small bronze lamp off the desk as she reached jerkily for the telephone. It fell, and was extinguished, fortunately starting no blaze, but leaving her in darkness. The bell rang furiously, peal after peal, before she felt her way to the instrument and put the receiver to her ear.

"Hello!" she cried out, her nerves shaken by the accident.

"Hello!" came back in Sid's voice.

Blanche dropped the receiver and caught hold of the edge of the desk. She could hear his voice gurgling away in the dangling instrument. She recovered herself somewhat, and put it to her ear again.

"Blanche—Blanche—hello, Blanche—see here, Central, you've cut me off—hello there!"

"Hello!" She barely whispered it.

"Is that you, Blanche?"

"Yes."

"I've got to see you." He spoke quietly.

"You can't see me!" She shrieked it back at him, so startled was she at his demand.

"I've got to."

"Why? You know you can't see me. You know I won't see you!"

Her voice was hysterical; his came back husky but measured.

"I've got to see you—now."

She broke shrillingly into laughter.

"I've got my decree!"

"I'm coming up there—now."

"I won't see you! I'll never see you!"

she burst out in fluent wrath, but presently realized that she was screaming into an empty phone.

"Number?" said Central.

"I—I'm talking to some one—I was talking—"

"Please hang up your receiver so they can call you."

Blanche obeyed mechanically. But Sidney Castle did not call her again. No, he was probably breaking all the speed laws in that car of his, Blanche thought. Driving furiously was Sid's way, sober or otherwise, and Blanche judged from his voice that he was "otherwise" to-night.

Why was he coming? How dare he come? She had her decree! She was irrevocably and most legally divorced from him. How dare he force himself upon her, as if he still had the right—as if she were still his wife?

She sat there in the dark, trembling from an angry soul and her nerves that had been strained to the snapping point.

"I won't see him," she muttered. "He shan't come in. I've done with Sid Castle! I'm divorced! I'm—I'm the little widow of the Money Twins."

She went off into peals of hysterical laughter all by herself in the dark. Then something stronger and crueler than nerves—hysteria or sardonic mirth—surged up in her, and she flung herself forward on the desk racking with sobs. The telephone went over after the lamp, and smashed on the floor. Central chattered vainly for some moments, then her spiral mutterings ceased. Blanche cried on helplessly.

The bell of the flat tinkled imperatively. Blanche started, clutched her hands together, and sat still. She was alone in the apartment. He could see, if he chose to look, that the windows were dark. He would think she had gone out in order to make his seeing her doubly impossible, and presently he would go away, and she would be left

quite alone, to work things out for herself. She felt that if she were to see him now she would shriek out the whole truth at him—and that were best buried forever in her own breast.

The imperative ringing continued. Blanche hid her head in her arms to deaden the sound. The ringing of Sidney Castle was to her ears as the singing of the sirens to Ulysses, a danger and a lure. She had a passionate desire to meet him, to stand before him and tell him everything, and, forgetting all his errors, to submit hers and herself wholly to his judgment "as it was in the beginning."

She remembered that she was divorced, and stuffed her fingers into her ears.

Simultaneously she heard his voice and saw the light. He was standing with his hand on the switch which manipulated the ceiling lamps. The room was flooded with white light.

"Blanche," he said huskily. "Blanche."

She sat still, silent, flinching under the glare, for the moment seeing him mistily.

"You wouldn't open the door, would you?"

"How did you get in?"

Her eyes were accustomed to the light now, and dry. She saw that his face was white and lined, his eyes hard and brilliant, dark-circled, with sleepless lids; his mouth twitched. He strode forward and threw a latchkey on the desk in front of her.

"I was using that pretty regularly up till a week or two ago. Did you think I couldn't use it to-night because some damn-fool court has given you a decree?"

"You'd better go—" Blanche began.

"You know what I think about that decree, don't you?" Sid went on, taking off his light overcoat.

He folded it carefully and placed it in the middle of the large center table. He smoothed out his cap and deposited it neatly on top of the coat.

"It doesn't matter what you think."

"I think any man is an ass that'll go

into a divorce court, and it doesn't make any difference to me, *personally*, whether he goes in as a judge, or a lawyer, or a correspondent. That's just the way I feel about it."

He ironed out the fingers of his gauntlets, and laid the gloves, one at a time, on top of his cap.

"I say he's rotten—perfectly rotten. That's what he is."

He took out a cigarette, bit off the end, and threw it into the grate.

"Sid—you shouldn't have come here—you—don't know what you're doing."

He studied the remnant of cigarette in his fingers for some moments, then put it down carefully on the mantel.

"You mean I'm drunk," he said quietly.

"Well, aren't you?" she said, faltering a little before the strained and hunted look in his eyes.

"That's what they've been telling me round town, but it's a mistake. I was drunk. I think I was drunk for five days, and all that time I kept on drinking, till I didn't have any mind to think with or tell whether I was drunk or sober. Then it lost its hold upon my mind. I guess I'd taken so much it had either to get me for good or I'd bust it for good. I ought to be drunk right now; but I'm not. I'm clearer than I've ever been in my life. Look here, I'll prove it to you. It's eight o'clock exactly by that little clock on the chimneypiece, isn't it? Not a minute more or less. And there are just three white roses in that carved brass vase on the top of your desk—just three and no more."

"If you will kindly tell me why you honor me with this rather untimely visit—" she began.

"And I'll prove it to you some more," he continued, unheeding her interruption. "I'll show you some more facts. You've spread around before a lot of old carrion-crow lawyers all the mess we've made of everything, and they've taken a nice little fee from you and given you a decree of divorce, and settled the whole trouble with a stroke of the pen."

"You could have contested—if you

had had any grounds—if you had cared to—"

The staring brilliance of his dark-circled eyes pierced her. She looked away, defiance and suffering inwardly rending her. He came and stood over her.

"I know what I could have done," he said huskily. "Understand that. I know what I could have done. You needn't think I don't know—because I do. And I was going to start something—at first. But when Henning got me to see just how you felt about me—that you were indifferent—that all you wanted was to be free from a man you disliked—well, I said 'all right'—and I let him make any terms he named, and I agreed to stand aside and let you go ahead and get yourself divorced if you wanted to as badly as all that."

She burst out:

"Then, since you did let me go so willingly, and I am divorced from you, perhaps you'll tell me now what right you have here."

"Sit down, Blanche. We've got an hour yet to settle this thing."

"It's settled! It's settled forever! I've got my decree! And you—you—why, you're nothing!"

Sid lighted a match, blew it out carefully, and threw match and unlit cigarette into the fireplace.

"I'll admit that's the way it looks on the outside," he said slowly. "I'll admit that. I can see the surface appearance of the thing just the way it seems to be. I've been a fool—and worse—and you've divorced me; because the law lets a woman do that when a man forgets what he owes his wife, and doesn't hold her under his protection the way he should. I've no right here at all—according to law. I'm nothing to you. You are sitting here—a divorced woman—in the house we made together, with a perfectly good decree that lets me out forever. Don't interrupt me, please, we haven't much time for argument. I say, that's the surface appearance of the thing, and I can see it as plain as anybody. But it's a lie. It's such a big lie that it's funny—funny but not humorous. I'm not laughing at it."

"Sid—there's no use in this. You'd better go."

Blanche's lips trembled. She rose as though to leave the room. He pushed her back into her chair, gently but decisively.

"Sit down, Blanche; we've got to settle this thing. Try to understand that I am not drunk. I quit drinking this afternoon at five o'clock, and I quit for good. I've got that *done*. That was about half an hour after I heard that you had—I quit then. I've been driving round Jackson Park steadily ever since, getting the rest of it straightened out. I must have been round that park sixty times. As soon as I saw all through this thing just the way it really is, I phoned you from a fruit stand near the park entrance—the first phone I struck—and came right on out here."

"If you please——"

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt me while I tell you about it. It's very simple when you once see it."

"It's too late for you to——"

Sid waved her to silence.

"You've got to get this, Blanche, because it's important. You're my wife—my *wife!* I never saw anything more plainly than I see that fact. You know that for four years there wasn't a thought or a feeling we didn't share. We belonged together; we proved that. We proved it when we built up a happy life together and a useful business, for you built your share of my business, Blanche, with the love, and joy, and fresh energy and hope you gave me. There isn't a scheme or a detail of it I can't see *you* in somewhere. We proved it when our quarrels didn't make any difference. When even the accidental touch of your hand or mine would quicken us both, and we'd forget there had ever been a quarrel. But I got my head turned making money so fast, and having older men, that I looked up to, praise my nerve, and my enterprise, and my brains—and you got yours turned spending it. We didn't use any more sense than a small kid on his first Fourth of July, and we got burned. We got charred."

He paused. She did not speak.

"I'm the chief sinner. I went wrong first—every way. That's one of the things I came here to say. It was when I began to see that fact that I felt I could come here—then I saw I *had* to come. I take all the wrong on my shoulders—all I know about, and all I don't know about—and I absolve *you* completely. Because I'm responsible for you. You were mine, and I didn't look after you. God knows that's the unholiest sin a man can commit—letting evil come to the woman who belongs to him, when he knows better than any one else—even herself—all the needs, and weaknesses, and sudden fires in her nature. He makes it his business to know them, and nurture and increase them for his own joy—and then to leave her at their mercy. That's casting pearls to swine if anything is. It's worse. It's throwing a living woman to—to—vultures. There can't be any sin as bad as what I've done to you."

Blanche broke out wildly, all the anguish, the shame, the bitterness, and the hopeless hurts of a year rushing in a torrent to her lips.

"There isn't! There isn't! And now I want you to know it all—and suffer—and suffer—over it—as I have! *You* could have turned the case against——"

Sid's hand was over her mouth. His eyes blazed into hers.

"Be quiet! Don't you dare to say anything—that I don't want to hear! You have nothing to confess to me, do you understand? I'm trying to undo what I've done. But I'm only a man; and a man's a brute to a woman about some things. There are some things he can't hear her say. That's all there is to that."

He drew back and surveyed her. Blanche shrank into her chair, quiet and frightened.

"What are you going to do with me?" she whispered, after the silence had become unbearable.

Sid watched her for a second or two before he answered. Then he said quietly:

"I'm going to take you West with me to-night on the twelve-ten. I've got to go to Billings, Montana, on busi-

ness that'll keep me there some weeks, maybe longer. We're going to go on and *finish right* what we began right—our life, and our business, and everything. We're going to know that it never was torn down, and that it never could be torn down!"

"Sid!" she gasped. "You're crazy! You can't! Why—you—we're *divorced!*"

"Like hell we are!" he exploded. "I'm going to make you eat that decree piecemeal before I'm through with it. To-morrow morning we'll stop off at the first town where I can get a license, and I'll marry you again—since the law demands it. That ought to show you what rot it was your trying to bring the law into *our* affairs. The law! It never touched us! And now you know it. But I will admit it took the divorce to make me see it."

He leaned down and looked into her eyes; a brief, nervous smile twitched his lips.

"Sid—Sid!" Blanche caught his hand, and twined her fingers round his tightly.

"Listen, girl, while I tell you about this law thing."

Sid's voice shook a little. He gripped the clinging fingers till Blanche could have cried out with the hurt of it.

"Don't you know it says 'They two shall be one flesh'? And the law is supposed to make them one. But it isn't the law. The law couldn't do it—alone. It's something else that makes one man and one woman into one flesh and one soul—not a law of state, but a law of their own natures—that makes them one flesh, as *we* were one. And when that has once come to a man and woman, and they have declared it and joined their lives together, they are always one. Sin claims to break it. And

divorce claims to break it. But you see for yourself, don't you, that it can't? Nothing can touch it. It was before all law, and it's clear outside of all law. So when that man and woman who are one—when they go wrong, no matter to what extent, girlie—"

Sid's voice broke and lapsed into silence, while Blanche's head drooped till it rested against his knee as he stood by her chair. They clung tight to each other's hands. Presently he continued:

"Divorce can't help them. It can't do a thing. They have to work it out themselves, and they have to work it out together, because it is *one* problem just as *they* are one. Divorce is only for those who were never really married any way but legally. But *we* were *one*—and so we must always be *one*. Come, now, my girl. There's just half an hour for you to pack a couple of suit cases. But there's a lifetime still for us to work it out—together."

"If you will only love me through it all, Sid. That will solve all my problem. There would never have been any problem for me if I'd always been sure that you loved me—sure I was *yours*."

"I know that, Blanche. That's why I say the whole fault was mine, and—that's why I'm eloping to Montana tonight with a divorced woman. *Your divorce!* I'll show you what I'll do to that!"

Passionately, trembling, she reached out to him, her eyes welling with tears, humility, and joy, her voice caressing his name.

"Sid—Sid—forgive me—for the divorce—for everything—"

He seized and held her close.

"I love every inch of you," he murmured against her lips. "You're my wife."



UNCLE PETER'S RESCUE WORK



BY
FREDERIC
TABER
COOPER

UNCLE PETER KIRSHWAY'S sense of locality was not overstrong, but he could always find his way from the Grand Central Station to the lodging house in which his nephew, Dick Hamlin, had bachelor quarters, for it chanced to be the third English basement west of Fourth Avenue, and the only one in the row that had no business signs in the windows. Yet to-day he hesitated, frankly puzzled, not only because the front door stood unwontedly ajar, but because the ground floor had been transformed since his last visit into a tea room, "The Satsuma Cup," and the second floor front proclaimed itself, in crimson letters, a "Conservatory of Vocal Culture."

Uncle Peter cast a helpless glance around him. On the opposite street corner a gang of expert wreckers were noisily demolishing the squat, brownstone church that had been in the past his trusted landmark. The dismantled spire still reared gaunt ruins from behind an armament of billboards, whereon a bevy of scantily clad soubrettes in purple tights brazenly pirouetted on silk-shod toes. That was the way they did things in this modern Nineveh! Such cataclysms, thank Heaven, could not happen overnight in the safe stability of Plantsville, Connecticut!

He was still helplessly wondering whether he had gone astray when Donovan, the pock-marked, red-haired Irish janitor, with blackened clay pipe between wide, smiling lips, emerged with a spacious tin pail in his left hand, and, looking neither to right nor left, slouched, not unswifly, down the

street, intent upon the joys of a pint of beer. Uncle Peter disapproved of beer; but he had a liking for Donovan, who never would have allowed him, had he happened to look that way, to carry his bag unaided up the long climb to his nephew's rooms.

Making a mental note that he certainly must advise Dick to move into better surroundings, Uncle Peter began his slow ascent, his well-worn Gladstone in hand, pausing at each landing, breathing puffily. The odors from the tea-room kitchen pursued him upward, visiting their iniquities upon the third and fourth elevation, as he observed irately while pausing upon the middle landing of the upper staircase to fit his key into the door of Dick's apartment, a rear addition of later construction than the rest of the house, with floors some feet below the level of the front rooms.

Uncle Peter always stayed overnight with Dick during his unforeseen incursions from Plantsville, and for that reason possessed a key of his own; otherwise, he might have had to camp out upon the stair landing indefinitely, since Dick's newspaper work made his hours erratic. Uncle Peter looked upon Dick more as a son than as a nephew, especially since the boy was soon to become his son-in-law. Aside from the savings bank, where he had begun as an errand boy and ended as president—the one-story, weather-stained little building of brick, unchanged through half a century—those two children, Dick and Bessie, were his chief interest in life, and he was impatient to see them safely married and settled.

It seemed an absurd and unfounded

scruple, almost a lack of affection, that Dick should insist upon a delay until he should become self-supporting.

"Haven't I money enough?" Uncle Peter would often fume. "Won't it all be yours some day; yours and Bessie's? Then, where's the sense of waiting, what the deuce? Where's the sense of waiting?"

It had seemed reasonable to assume that Dick would go into the bank and work his way up, just as he himself had done. But Dick had proved obstinate. Dick would go his own way; and in his secret heart Uncle Peter took pride in the boy's headway in journalism, for his letters told that he was already a—what was that queer term? —star reporter, that was it, with a chance of being made night editor before long.

Uncle Peter trusted Dick, of course, but he did not trust New York. It was a corrupt, ungodly place, where saloons were open on Sunday and the white-slave traffic flourished. Even though he did live in Plantsville, Uncle Peter read the magazines.

As the apartment door swung inward, he was vaguely struck with a sense of unfamiliarity, a pervading atmosphere of change. It was three months since Uncle Peter's last visit, time enough in which to have the edge of his memory wear dull. Yet unmistakably there were new curtains in the windows, new pictures on the walls.

He proceeded to explore the room rather carefully, becoming conscious of radical alterations. Dick's taste in the past had been simple; he had been content with little more than the plain, substantial furnishings that went with the rooms. It was evident, however, that the young man's standards of living had been raised. It was not merely that the wall had been repapered, and that there were two or three rugs upon the floor, which, even to Uncle Peter's inexperience, proclaimed themselves expensive; but a few rather fine etchings in appropriate frames had replaced the heterogeneous collection of prints and photographs, secured to the walls with carpet tacks; while above Dick's desk—

which also had an altered look—the wall space formerly occupied by Bessie's photograph now held a rather audacious French poster, which made Uncle Peter raise his eyebrows and carefully readjust his glasses.

Moreover, the mantelpiece exhibited a long line of young women in various poses and clad in varying degrees of scantiness; and a further index to Dick's moral degeneration was a glass-fronted sideboard containing an assortment of glasses, bottles, and decanters.

"Tut, tut!" said Uncle Peter. "I really must have a serious talk with Dick. Well, well, the boy certainly does smoke good cigars!" he added, discovering the open box upon the side table.

He helped himself to one of them, and started to light it, then changed his mind, slipped it into his waistcoat pocket, and passed into the adjoining toilet room. Here he removed his coat and prepared to efface the stains of travel, and compel his sparse and bristly gray hair to assume a semblance of decorum.

The click of a key in the door through which he had admitted himself interrupted Uncle Peter's ablutions as well as his thoughts. Silently he wiped the soapy water from face and hands, and silently tiptoed across the closet, wishing to render Dick's surprise as complete as possible. Yet he felt a premonition that the greeting would not be wholly that of other times—a spontaneous, bearlike hug, a joyous shout of: "Dear old Uncle Peter, if this isn't just the jolliest ever!" No, he was half prepared this time to see Dick look self-conscious and ill at ease, to know that his welcome was not quite genuine.

But as he peered through the crack between the hinges of the closet door, there dawned upon him from the outer hall a vision of a spreading purple hat, crowned with infinite purple plumes, and beneath it a slim young woman, moving without hurry, but with a lithe and serpentine grace. Her one furtive action was when she glanced backward down the stairs she had just mounted and closed the door behind her with

visible relief. She swept the room with one swift, comprehensive look, then crossed to the fireplace, and deliberately seated herself before the cheerful blaze in the open grate. She had every appearance of being prepared to remain indefinitely.

Uncle Peter was, for the moment, dumfounded. Could he, by any chance, have blundered into the wrong house? No, that was impossible; his key would not have fitted another lock. Besides, he recognized the place, in spite of changes, by a number of unmistakable little things; a crack or two in the marble of the washbasin, a loose screw in the doorknob, which had often scratched his hand. No, no, the mistake was the other way; it was the young woman who had blundered.

But on second thought he realized that this also was a wrong conjecture. The young woman plainly did not belong there, and was quite aware of the fact. She had made no movement to take off her hat or gloves; she was obviously waiting for some one—and who could that some one be, if not Dick? The young reprobate!

With the vision of Bessie's wistful face rising before him, Uncle Peter felt the stirrings of swift and righteous anger. Hastily donning his coat, with a jerk and a wriggle, he emerged into the sitting room, with no further attempt to step lightly.

With a faint scream, the young woman sprang to her feet with every sign of embarrassment and alarm. Her first instinct was obviously that of flight; but the old gentleman had so maneuvered his advance as to interpose the barrier of his portly person between the visitor and the outer door. Realizing that she was cornered, she eyed him dubiously for a moment, suspicion legible in every line of her pretty face.

"Bless my soul! I believe she takes me for a thief!" thought Uncle Peter.

As if reassured by his appearance, she plucked up courage and spoke.

"These are not your rooms," she said. "What are you doing here?"

"I might ask you the same question, madam," he retorted, rather stiffly; "and

with better right, for they certainly are not your rooms, either. But I will save you from the embarrassment of answering. I am here to wait for my nephew. If you know him as well as your presence here implies, you must have heard him speak of his Uncle Peter?"

But even as he spoke, he realized, with a sharp stab, that if Dick had so far forgotten what he owed to Bessie as this young woman's visit indicated, he would not have been likely to mention his family connections.

The visitor mutely shook her head. She had become excessively troubled.

"That is just it," she said, with a little break in her voice. "I don't know him nearly as well as you must think I do, seeing me here. I have given you an entirely wrong idea. I see now how foolish I was to come!"

"And did you never happen to feel that it was foolish to come here before?" asked Uncle Peter, in a tone that he meant to be very severe. "Have you never thought that my nephew's bachelor apartments are not exactly the proper place for a good-looking young woman who wishes to be thought respectable?"

Her face had been averted, but now she turned upon him indignantly, her wide, blue eyes flashing resentment as they met his squarely.

"You have no right to speak that way," she said. "You have no right to infer that I ever came here before. I wish that I never had come at all."

The odd little break occurred in her voice again. If it had been a carefully cultivated trick it could not have been more effective. It had the result of making Uncle Peter feel himself next of kin to a brute.

"My dear," he said, with sudden compunction, "you are quite right. I had no business to judge by appearances. But I am sorry to see any woman so young and pretty as you are taking a foolish step. Now, I love that nephew of mine very dearly, but, by Jupiter, if he has asked you up here to his rooms, he has done a cowardly thing, and I am not going to forgive him in a hurry."

"Oh, but please," said the young

woman, "I don't want to make trouble. There is no reason to be angry with him. He asked me to come here just out of kindness—just because his instinct is to be kind."

Big, innocent eyes looked frankly into Uncle Peter's from under the wide, purple brim. He felt his indignation swelling rapidly.

"I dare say," he retorted grimly, "too confounded kind altogether. See here, young woman, will you let an old man, who doesn't mean to be inquisitive, ask you two or three personal questions?" She merely nodded mutely in reply, and he looked at her rather shrewdly for a moment. "You are married, aren't you?" he then asked.

A curious change swept over the girl's face. It suddenly took on an older look—hard, crafty, almost impudent; the look she might have worn had he caught her stealing his handkerchief. Uncle Peter remembered it afterward through a haze of dimmer memories. Then her eyes instinctively followed his gaze down to her left hand. As quickly as the look had come it faded. His question had evidently been based on guesswork, not on knowledge.

"Oh, I see!" she said, with a little ripple of laughter that made Uncle Peter wish she would laugh again. She twisted the ring upon her finger until the setting came into view. "It's not a wedding ring; the stone was shoved around inside." She hesitated, then added in a more confidential tone: "You guessed right, though. I am married."

"Then what are you doing running around to other men's rooms? Why aren't you at home, where you belong?"

The girl made a wry face, and shrugged her shoulders expressively.

"It's dead stupid at home," she said candidly. "Sam's away most of the time. He travels for a glove firm. I can't go to the theaters often; it costs too much. And I'm sick of moving-picture shows. I'm sick of being poor, too," she added.

Again the break in her voice affected Uncle Peter like the sobbing of a child. He began to think that he had a pretty

clear grasp of the situation. How providential it was that he had come upon the scene just in time to give her the paternal guidance that she so much needed!

"Come, sit down again and talk it over a bit," he said, with gruff kindness. "Tell me, how did you meet my nephew? Is he a friend of—Sam?"

She hesitated, as though seeking an explanation that would sound plausible; then apparently decided that it was simpler to tell the truth.

"It was raining, and I had on my best hat—no, not this one, but the best I had then—and no umbrella. He—he asked if he might save me from getting wet—so I let him walk home with me—and—and—"

"Well?" said Uncle Peter encouragingly. He was every minute becoming more sorry for this very pretty and amazingly simple young woman. Could she really be as simple as she seemed?

"And that was all," she concluded lamely. "Only, he was so nice and kind that the next time I saw him I couldn't be so rude as not to bow—he had saved my hat, you know!"

There was a swift glint of mischief in her eyes. "What a child she is!" thought Uncle Peter.

"And after that?" he prompted gently.

"After that—well, we met several times quite accidentally; and then, one day, he asked me to take luncheon with him. You don't know how lonely it is, taking three meals a day, all by oneself!" she added, in extenuation.

"And Sam wasn't told about the rain, or the umbrella, or the luncheon, I'll be bound!" scolded Uncle Peter, better pleased with himself every minute. She was proving more tractable than he had expected. "I think there is something more," he added persuasively. "Come out with it, young lady; let's have the whole story."

"How did you guess?" she faltered. "Oh, it isn't anything very dreadful—though I dare say you will call it horrid. It was the first day he took me to luncheon—and the restaurant was full of people; prosperous, fashionable people;

and all the other women wore such pretty, expensive things. It half spoiled everything, because I couldn't help thinking all the time of my shabby gloves and shoes and my cheap shirt waist, and I fairly burned all over. Well, he noticed something was wrong—you know how quick he is to notice things?"

Uncle Peter did not acquiesce this time. Somehow, it never had struck him that Dick was especially observant of this sort of thing. He realized that he was getting a new side light upon Dick's character.

"Well, he just made me tell him what the trouble was. And when I had once begun, I couldn't help telling him of all the pretty things that I longed for and couldn't have, and how ashamed I was to go to fashionable restaurants dressed like a second-rate stenographer. Oh, don't look at me like that! It makes the whole thing seem so wrong!"

"It ought to seem wrong," said Uncle Peter relentlessly. "I suppose, young woman, you are trying to tell me that you let my nephew spend a lot of money on you? And you a married woman?"

"Oh, but I can't tell you any more about it if you are going to be so unkind!" There was a hint of tears in her voice. "It isn't fair to judge before you understand how it happened. He talked a whole lot of nonsense, just to cheer me up. After luncheon, he said, we were going to play a new game, a jolly little game that he had just made up. We would pretend between ourselves that I was a little girl, and that he was my uncle and was going to take me shopping—and that little girls must do as they are told, and never ask their uncles questions about what they were going to buy or how much things cost. He said it was sure to be a good game, because uncles were just the nicest things in the world!"

"Oh, he said that, did he? The young rascal!" interjected Uncle Peter, in a mollified tone. "And you thought it would be a nice game, too, I dare say!"

"Not at all. I was quite angry, and said that he had insulted me—which

was rather mean of me, don't you think so, just after he had given me such nice things to eat? And then he said that now I would simply have to let him have his way, to prove that I didn't really believe he had meant it as an insult. He is just the nicest sort of person to go shopping with," she concluded confidentially.

"Undoubtedly," said Uncle Peter. "And did this irregular and reprehensible sort of game stop there, or did you form a habit of playing it frequently?"

"Oh, the game part of it was just a joke. Of course, I couldn't let him buy the things himself, but I did accept a loan of some money—I made him understand that very distinctly, that it was only a loan—but the trouble is that I don't know when I am ever going to be able to pay it back!"

"What's the good of trying to fool yourself?" said Uncle Peter practically. "You know that you have accepted money from him which you don't expect to pay back. And because you are in his debt that way, you find it gets harder and harder to say 'no' when he asks you to accept other things, and meet him in other places, even in his rooms? Isn't that so?"

"Oh, how wonderfully you understand!" breathed the girl softly.

"Well, now, what did all those pretty things you had been longing for—gloves and shoes and what not; and I suppose that feather duster hat was part of it—what did they all come to? Or don't you know?" catechized Uncle Peter.

"Fifty dollars altogether. I had part of the feathers already," faltered the young woman. "I had them dyed to match."

Uncle Peter squared his shoulders, threw out his chest, and assumed the solemn air with which he was accustomed to address the Sabbath school on Sunday mornings.

"For your own good, my dear, I am going to speak plainly, even at the risk of hurting your feelings. You meant no harm. I give you credit for that. And that nephew of mine is a blackguard. God forgive me for speaking so harshly of him! But you have been

playing fast and loose with your good name; that's what you have been doing, young woman. Yes, you have! What if Sam had found out about it, eh? What would he have said to another man's paying for your gloves, and hats, and stockings—yes, and I don't know, and I don't want to know, what else besides!" Uncle Peter was apoplectic with mingled emotions. "What if your Sam had followed you here? Don't you know there might have been a fight, there might have been bloodshed, it might have ended in divorce or murder, or I don't know what? And all on account of your foolish vanity; all for the sake of a few silly purple feathers!"

The culprit had buried her face in her handkerchief, and was emitting sounds that might have been sobs or laughter, every one of which wrung Uncle Peter's heart.

"What can I do? What can I do?" came in muffled tones through the handkerchief.

"There is only one thing to do," said Uncle Peter. "You must pay back that money at once."

"Oh, but I can't. I haven't any myself, and I don't dare to ask Sam for it."

"Of course not. I am going to give you the money myself, right here and now."

"Oh, but I can't take it; indeed, I can't! You are just the kindest man that ever lived; but a married woman mustn't take money from other men; you said so yourself!"

"I believe you are laughing at me, you disrespectful young person," said Uncle Peter, secretly rather amused at her audacity. "It isn't the same thing at all! You can take the money, and you will. I'm not asking you to take luncheon with me, or to go shopping for silk hose, or to come to my rooms for tea!" He fairly snorted at the preposterous idea. Yet at the same time it occurred to him that there were diversions in life less agreeable than sitting across the table from such an attractive young woman, who had such exceedingly grateful eyes. "Here is the money—ten, twenty, thirty, forty,

fifty. Now, sit down at that desk and write a little note. Write it your own way; but make him understand quite distinctly that this irregular and impossible sort of friendship must stop at once. You appreciate his kindness, but you are returning the money he lent you, and which you realize it was very wrong in you to accept. And don't forget to put the latchkey in with it."

The slim figure sank obediently into the designated chair, the purple hat was bowed low over pen and paper, and for a few moments a silence ensued. Then she sealed and addressed the envelope with a queer little sigh, and laid it, face downward, on the blotter.

"Poor child!" thought Uncle Peter, with a throb of sympathy. "The death of a little romance, and no doubt it hurts. Does she really care, I wonder?"

The young woman rose from her seat and faced him. Somehow she did not look in the least as Uncle Peter had expected. Embarrassment, shamefacedness, contrition had vanished. In their place was an odd look, halfway between elation and suppressed merriment. And then she said an extremely odd thing.

"You funny man!" she said. "You certainly are a good sort! I haven't had such sport in months!"

She reached the hall door, hesitated, then with a lithe movement turned back, and, with the swiftness of a swooping bird, bestowed upon Uncle Peter an electrifying kiss.

"I owed you that much!" she said, and vanished.

Uncle Peter stood, gasping, staring at the closed door, trying to catch his breath. Why, the hussy! The minx! The audacious little devil! He had never had such an adventure in all his life! Well, well, she certainly was a dangerous young person; more dangerous than he had imagined. He was glad that he had rescued Dick. He realized now that the poor boy was not so much to blame as he had at first been ready to think. What an odd perfume the young woman used! He wished he knew what it was. What an extraordinary experience; but certainly not one to be mentioned at home!

"Shall I wait for the boy or not?" queried Uncle Peter. "No, I'll be going along, I guess. The boy may take it hard, and I don't want to hurt him worse with the knowledge that I had a hand in it."

He took up his Gladstone, then set it down again, and glanced doubtfully at the letter. It was not very safe to leave an envelope containing fifty dollars in currency lying around loose. With no definite purpose, he took up the letter, turned it over, and read the superscription. To his amazement, it was addressed to himself, addressed simply to "Uncle Peter." Furthermore, it was surprisingly thin to the touch, and there certainly was no latchkey in it.

With dawning enlightenment, Uncle Peter tore the envelope open. It contained only a single sheet, with half a dozen lines of writing.

DEAR UNCLE PETER: On second thought, I am going to keep your fifty dollars myself. I am sure I need it more than Dick does. Don't worry, you never need know what I am going to buy with it. And I'll keep the latchkey, too, for I may need it again. Don't waste sympathy on Sam—Sam is a myth!

Yours gratefully,
PURPLE FEATHERS.

With as much haste as his elderly limbs could muster, Uncle Peter betook himself down the four flights of lodging-house stairs, this time omitting to pause upon the landings. It was not until he reached the front door that he realized the futility of trying to pursue her. He suddenly recognized that he could not afford to make a fuss. What sort of a figure would he, Peter Kirshway, president of the Plantsville Sowers and Reapers' Savings Bank, and superintendent of the Plantsville First Congregational Church Sunday School, make if it became known that he had met a strange young woman alone in the fourth floor back of a New York lodging house, and had given her fifty dollars in bank notes? But Heaven help poor Dick, now that she was branded a thief as well as an adventuress!

As Uncle Peter emerged upon the

sidewalk, Donovan, the pock-marked, red-haired janitor, was on the point of entering, his blue overalls bearing dusty witness to a recent struggle with ash cans.

"Ah, Misther Kirshway," he said heartily, "an' sorra 'tis that I didn't see you come in. I could have saved you the climb."

"My nephew is out," said Uncle Peter shortly.

"Out is it? Sure, Misther Kirshway, didn't you know that he's afther moving away?"

"Moved away?" cried Uncle Peter, in amazement. "No, the boy never wrote a word about it. Just like his forgetfulness. His letters all go to his club, so, of course, I didn't need to know."

"Sorry I was to lose him," pursued Donovan. "A fine, nice-spoken young gentleman he always was, and a generous, too. A very different sort from the one that has his rooms now! Oh, the things I could tell you, Misther Kirshway!" He winked his eye suggestively.

"Queer company, eh?" hinted Uncle Peter.

"You may well say that, Misther Kirshway, you may well say that. Too many petticoats and feathers for a respectable house; and that's the thruth. Misther Richard was a very different sort. He never went in for such like disrepectability."

Out of sheer gratitude, Uncle Peter took a cigar from his pocket and bestowed it upon Donovan as a parting gift.

"Bless my soul!" he told himself a moment later. "I stole that cigar!"

He paused on the street corner, staring mechanically across at the billboards on which the bevy of soubrettes still unweariedly twirled upon silk-shod toes.

"Thank God, it wasn't Dick!" he said fervently. "It's worth the money just to know that! But what an extraordinary perfume the young woman used! I wish I knew what it was!"

THE LAST MAN

BY
HERMAN WHITAKER

SEGURAMENTE! The shot came from here!"

Having forced their sweating beasts on a wild scramble up the last loose bank of shale, both the *comandante* and his *rurales* turned puzzled looks between his splintered saddle horn and the empty prospect below. From their feet the ridge—a huge saddleback that would have been styled a mountain anywhere but in the Sierra Madres—fell off a thousand feet through thin chaparral, and so ran at decreasing angles into the dead flat of the Sonora Desert. It was, of course, a full half mile from the spot where the *diligencia* stood, with the remainder of the command strung out behind like gray scales on a yellow-headed snake. But they had covered it at a gallop, and on its other side the ridge ran down, clean and bare, without cover for even a rabbit. The lone dead yucca palm that raised its dead, withered head fifty feet above them might, as a grizzled sergeant suggested, have lent its trunk to the sharpshooter; but he received only a curse for his pains.

"Then, where is he now, fool?" the *comandante* exclaimed. "As thou seest, the mountain side is empty."

He grew still angrier at a second suggestion, based on the absence of smoke, that the shot had been fired by some evil spirit in league with the Yaquis.

"No smoke, sayest thou? *Tu grandissimo carbone!* Do not all these Yaqui devils use smokeless powder? A plague

on the Yankees, from whom they buy it! Senseless pigs! After supplying them with arms and munitions, they then run to Tio Porfirio with complaints of Yaqui outrages! *Maldito!* Were I in *el presidente's* shoes there should soon be an end. I would drive Yaquis and Yankees together into the sea."

"Si," the sergeant growlingly agreed. "I, also, could never fathom Tio Porfirio's fondness for the Yankees. 'Tis true their dollars have built his railways. But there are two sides to that business. One day he will awaken to find that he has ensnared us all in their iron net. So count me in on that same driving."

"Some day—please the saints!" The *comandante* crossed himself. "For the present, where is the Yaqui that fired this shot? Take thou the men, and beat among the rocks down there."

A large man, past middle age, and possessed of a waistline that abundantly testified to his love of ease, he remained on the ridge, moved his horse into the yucca's thin shade, and so sat, fanning himself with his sombrero, while the sergeant led his men on wider and wider search below.

A mass of withered spikes, droppings of several seasons, had lodged in the crotch of the tree above, but he did not hear them rustle; and if he had it would have been impossible to have detected the eye that burned like a black spark in the heart of the mass. The glances with which it persistently meas-

ured the increasing distance between himself and the troop betrayed a deadly desire.

Twice during the half hour's search the leaves parted, revealing a Colt's automatic pistol of heavy caliber trained full on his back. But always the glance passed on downhill, and when, obedient to the *comandante's* shout, the *rurales* returned uphill, the black spark faded completely out.

It did not appear again until they had gone back to the *diligencia*; and the column had resolved into its original likeness to a gray snake wriggling through the clouds of yellow dust before a black head thrust up out of the hollow trunk beneath the foliage. After the snake had wriggled out of sight among distant growth of cactus and *palo verde*, a lean, bronze body followed. Then, having lowered his rifle and pistol by a thin cord to the ground, the Yaqui slid down the trunk.

For some time thereafter he stood watching the dust cloud from under his hand. All around—north, south, east, and west—dusty sage and mimosa ran out, a sad, ashen sea, shored in by far mountains that loomed dusky purple, or stood out in stark chromes as they happened to lie to the sun. Late afternoon, the luminary now hung like a smoky lamp in the far dust of the desert, but though its light had begun to take on the rich tones of evening there was no cess of the dry heat. Streaming upon him for that low level, certain red-hot rays dissolved his bronze, toning it with golden hues, and as he stood there overlooking that solitary land he typified the lonely genius of his stubborn race.

It was emblematic, too—that steadfast pose—of the thirsty hate which, first of all the Yaquis, had set his feet on the warpath, kept them there when even Chief Bule and his men had returned to their mountain homes. In any of his race hatred of the Mexican is, of course, instinctive; but in him it had been raised to the exaltation of madness by personal wrongs.

Ever since the day—while still a lad—he had returned from a late hunt to

see, by the light of burning huts, the women and girls of his village being dragged away by soldiers he had ceaselessly followed the trail. That night his rifle had picked off two sentries, and since then never a year, and usually few months, had passed without its death crack ringing out from the crest of some ridge.

For that was his method. From selected coverts he shot, as to-day, at Mexican travelers along the trails. Its eminent success was proven by the double row of nicks along the butt of his gun, the last of which recorded the headlong plunge of a Mexican *vaquero* yesterday, though its unbroken continuance was largely due to the craft that had kept him from killing within a hundred-mile circle of the American mine where he worked, at intervals, to obtain the sinews of war, and toward which he now turned his face.

Rifle held loosely in his hand, he ran down the opposite slope, and in five minutes was speeding over the desert at a speed that would have killed either a horse or shod man. But where these would have floundered ankle deep in the sand, his widespread toes took light yet strong hold. In two hours he covered the fifteen miles across to the next range, foothills of the Sierra Madres.

While he was going, a smoky gloaming overlaid the desert ash with a wash of lavender and purple. Soon these faded, then night wiped all out; but a full moon lighted him up the tortuous *barranco* that ended in a cave. Though its windings would have concealed the fire he usually lighted, to-night he ate some dried meat in black darkness; a few minutes later he was fast asleep.

Dawn found him already on the other side of the range going downhill into a chain of valleys. Here, in mountain pastures, roamed the flocks and herds of many *haciendas*, but though he sighted now a *vaquero*, again a Mexican girl washing her clothes at a brook, once drew a bead on a sheep-herder who stood out in outline against the sky, he was now within his dead line, and passed on without firing a shot.

Up and down long brown slopes, across gray desert stretches, under the frown of bald mountains, now in the shade of black *pinyon*, through streaming sunlight, smoky reds of evening, he ran on with the long lop of a hound, nor paused until, at dark, he reached his last covert, twenty miles from the Santa Gertrudis Mine.

It has been said that clothes do not make the man. Nevertheless, it was difficult to recognize in the peon miner who came out of the cave at daylight the lithe Yaqui who entered therein by night. Blue jean overalls and a gray flannel shirt flapped loosely around his sinewy limbs. A tattered sombrero threw deep shadows over his fierce eyes. The whole disguise was wonderfully helped by the fact that, in its roundness and absence of the usual prominent cheek bones, his face departed widely from the Yaqui type.

His guttural laugh, touching the last bright nick before he cached his rifle and pistol under a slide of rock, might very well have belonged to that Yaqui. But he was utterly lost in the stupid *mozo* who, a couple of hours later, was questioned by a cavalry patrol from the nearest Mexican barracks.

If it had not been that they rode out upon him from thick chaparral that bounded the wide fields of the *hacienda* he had to cross on his way to the mine, they would never even have seen him. Caught, he fooled them with his rustic stupidity.

"I, señor?" he answered the commander's questions. "I am Pedro, the *mozo* from the Hacienda San Gabriel, over there. The señor's pacing mule strayed away last night. It is, perhaps, that you have seen her?"

At that very moment a San Gabriel plowman was moving toward them along his furrow. But the slow oxen afforded time for the audacious statement to carry.

"We have seen only thee, ass! Off with thee to find thine own relatives!"

But as, leaning down, the officer soundly cuffed his ears, he caught, un-

der the brim of the sombrero, a glimpse of fierce eyes.

"That fellow is dangerous," he mused, looking after him. "I wonder—but no! His face is too round."

"He would not be the first peon we have shot for a Yaqui," his lieutenant suggested. "What matters it if we make our full count? As thou knowest, *el general* is furious over these continual murders. If thou sayest—"

"No, hombre, no!" the other answered. "Don Roberto, over there, is my good friend, and I would not rob him of his peon. *Vamios!*"

Plodding steadily onward now, as was becoming in a peon, the Yaqui heard, an hour later, the distant thunder of the Santa Gertrudis stamps; but it was almost noon before he came out from the short cut that led across the dumps to the office, the first building in a galvanized-iron village. It happened that the superintendent had just opened his books for the inspection of the auditor, who had arrived on the preceding evening from the United States, and both men looked up as the Yaqui's shadow was thrown by the fierce sun in through the doorway.

"Hello!" the superintendent, a grizzled mining engineer, hailed him. "Back again! A cavalry patrol was here last night looking for fighters. I was sure that by this time you must be halfway to Yucatan."

Though he spoke in English, the Yaqui understood, for he answered at once, in Spanish:

"The patrol? What should it want with me—a poor peon, who has naught but the wage that he takes from thee? In any case, thou wouldst have spoken to my faithful service?"

"To be sure I would!" the superintendent gave hearty answer. "Than you we have no better worker—more's the pity that you don't keep steadily at it. While you were away there was a chance for promotion, and I had to put another man up in your place. Why don't you quit—cut out these frequent absences? Uncle Porfirio is on top, and he's going to stay there. Louis Bule knew it when he signed the peace."

Turning, the man spat out of the door, and so hid the sudden writhing of his face.

"Absences, Don Guillermo? A man must visit his relatives on occasion, and, as thou knowest, it is a long travel to our villages."

"Yes, yes!" The superintendent laughed. "I trust you left them well. And I'm glad enough to see you back, for we have been running short-handed. Go and report to the foreman."

Throughout the conversation the auditor's spectacles had radiated a shining interest, for, though he caught only half of the conversation, he saw by that how very far its tenor departed from his own peaceful commercial ways. His imagination, however, had not carried him anything like the full distance. He looked both surprised and shocked when the superintendent explained.

"You don't mean to say that you employ men whom you know to be murderers?"

Annoyance and just a touch of contempt leavened the good humor of the other's face.

"That's a hard word, Gridley. You wouldn't think of applying it, for instance, to the colonists, who pot-shotted the British soldiers in seventy-six?"

"Of course not! They were patriots—fighting for freedom."

"Well—so are the Yaquis."

"But I understand they are hopelessly beaten?"

"Yes, by Harriman's railroad, plus the complaints of our government. If it hadn't been for the aid of one, the persistent nagging of the other, the Mexicans would never have gotten up steam enough to finish the job. But does that alter the principle? When is a patriot not a patriot? You say when he is beaten! To my thinking, if a people is to be considered patriotic for winning its freedom after a couple of campaigns, how much more so one that has fought, generation after generation, through several centuries? If there ever was a patriot, it is your Yaqui."

Laughing at the sudden uncertainty

which undermined the other's confidence, he ran on:

"Coming down from these high principles to common, everyday business, be it known unto you, *señor el gringo*, that the Yaquis are the finest kind of workers. Any one of the hundred we employ does as much work as two Mexican peons, and were we to let out every one that has killed his man we should have to fire them all!"

"But they attack us, also?" The auditor's spectacles now burned with righteous indignation. "What about the twenty-thousand loss we just wrote off for that burned wagon train?"

The superintendent shrugged.

"Our fault for employing Mexican teamsters—besides, you could hardly blame the Yaquis. You see, they caught 'em in the middle of the desert, where they couldn't get any wood. They just had to use the wagons to burn them."

"Burn them?"

Repressing a smile at the other's horror, he nodded.

"That's the way the war goes—here. If it wasn't for fear of spoiling your lunch I'd tell you a few stories—of both sides, for there isn't a toss-up between them. Of course, it is too late to go back fishing for first causes now, and it really doesn't matter whether the initial atrocity was perpetrated by Mexicans or Yaquis.

"To-day the root of the trouble is to be found in the fact that the Yaquis practically tried to set up their own republic within the confines of Uncle Porfirio's domains.

"Like our own Indians, before the wars crowded them into reservations, they hold—or, rather, were holding—thousands of miles of land more than was actually required for their subsistence, and it isn't to be imagined that, while the waves of population are sloping over and flowing out from the old centers of civilization, they could ever be allowed to hold it. If Tio Porfirio had not disposed of them, Uncle Sam soon would."

"It is true the old gentleman handled them roughly. But if you had ever seen a Mexican *hacienda* that had been

sacked by Yaquis—ugh! But you never will, for the picture is too terrible for paint or words. Of course, again, it was pretty hard to strike at the men through the women and children. But the Yaqui doesn't fear death. You could go on shooting them against a wall for the next thousand years, and they'd never quit; and it wasn't until they saw their wives and daughters being deported by thousands that their courage shriveled. Only a few irreconcilables like this fellow now stand out. But, though I feel and understand the folly of it, I can never find it in my heart to blame, much less fire, him. But there's the bell—come on to lunch."

The conversation had occupied very few minutes, and, going out, they caught a glimpse of the Yaqui making his way among the rude grass huts beyond the official mine buildings.

"Lives there with his old mother," the superintendent commented. "His only relative, by the way, that escaped a wholesale scoop which sent the entire populations of several villages to Yucatan. His woman was gathered in along with all of his brothers and sisters, and he never took another."

"Poor devil!" the auditor murmured his compassion. "Now I begin to see."

Both unaware of their gaze and unmindful of the greetings that were called after him from their doorways by dark-skinned Yaqui women, the man walked on till he had gained the last and smallest hut.

Inside, his mother was bending over her cooking pots, and as, straightening, she lifted her face to the light, it revealed remarkable differences from that of the son; had all of the breadth, harshness of feature and skin of the pronounced Indian types; their resemblance, indeed, could only be traced around the eyes.

As is customary among the women of southern tribes, she had borne him, her first child, at fourteen. But though she still lacked a year or two of forty, the desert winds and fierce suns had parched and wrinkled her face till it looked like a scorched hide. The smoke of many camp fires, too, had dimmed

her eyes; yet, though it hung, a thick blue veil, in the hut, and she could see him only as a sharp shadow in the streaming gold of the doorway, she had recognized his footfall, and spoke at once:

"It is thee? How went the hunt?"
"One."

Though they could see out all round through the split-hole siding, and eavesdropping was impossible, nothing else passed between them. Mumbling to herself, the woman returned to her cooking, and not until he had eaten the rice and chili she placed before him did he speak again.

"There was almost another—a *comandante of rurales*, a new man to the desert. If his horse had not stumbled! But every day he guards the *diligencia*. Next time!"

"A curse on that horse!" she muttered. Then, as her dull eyes lit to some old memory, she asked: "A *comandante of rurales*, thou saidst? There was a man—but he had only a troop. Still, in these years he would have risen. What manner of man was this?"

"Large—for a Mexican. On one cheek he carries a scar—"

"Here?" She drew a finger diagonally from cheek bone to the corner of her mouth.

"Si," he nodded, surprised.

For fully a minute thereafter she just stood and stared, every wrinkle and seam of her gnarled visage drawn in horror and surprise. Then while the sunset lights of old remembrances flared in her eyes, she burst out:

"No, no! It is not for thee to lift a hand against him! It is not for the, I say!"

As his mouth opened to speak, she repeated it in a strained whisper, agony of speech that bent her almost double. So far they had spoken altogether in Spanish, but as she now straightened to a thrill of feeling that set her upon her toes, she burst into a torrent of Yaqui speech; and as she ran on, now in strained whispers, again in a shrill monotone, his natural stoicism melted. The deep bronze of his face quivered like molten metal.

It set again at her conclusion: "Thou wilt not kill him?"

"No, I will not—kill him."

To her the slow answer carried some subtle meaning, for as he turned to go out she laid her hand on his arm, while her hot, dry eyes searched his face. But when he shook it off, her Indian fatalism reasserted itself. Squatting in the dust, she drew her shawl over her head.

While she sat there, bowed like a watcher beside the dead, he retraced his way through the jumble of huts. As he passed the office where the superintendent and auditor were in full enjoyment of an after-dinner cigar, the former called out to him. But, though a flash of annoyance crossed his face, he paused to answer:

"No, señor, I am not going to work."

"Tut, tut!" The superintendent clucked his disgust. With a flash of anger, he called out: "Very well, but don't come back. If you leave us now in a pinch we'll never employ you again."

"*Bien, señor, muy bien.*"

He had not even looked back, and, realizing how completely the bluff had failed, the superintendent called again:

"Oh, come now, don't be a fool! This is bound to end in your being sent to Yucatan. Better quit it—while you can."

"I will, señor—after I get one more Mexican."

Perplexed, the superintendent stood, watching him go.

"You know that is awfully queer, Gridley. In all the years I have worked them, this is the first time a Yaqui ever acknowledged that he was going out after Mexicans. There's something funny here. Let us go down and see the old woman."

They found her still in the dust, and the only answer she returned to the superintendent's greeting was to point at a rough bench.

"Sit down," he whispered. "These people are never in a hurry. There's something there, but, whatever it is, she's turning it over and over in her

mind. When it comes, in her own time, it will be with the rush of the wind."

And it did, when—after a hot silence during which the auditor thought he could hear the splash of his sweat in the dust—the withered face rose out of the shawl; in a flood of rhythmic Spanish, that rose and fell with the lilt of a far-off stream, it came pouring out of her.

"You would know why he has gone away, señor? And you shall, for who has the right more than you, who were always a father to the Yaquis? You shall know it from the beginning, from the day—twenty-six years ago—that it was sown, the seed that ripened to-day. In the red ashes of a Yaqui village was that seed sown by hands still wet with the blood of my kinsmen. Watered it was with the tears of the widow and orphan, and under the red heat of burned villages it upgrew into a shoot both tall and strong.

"I fought with him that night, señor—the big *rurale* that carried me away on the saddle before him. To this day he bears the mark of my knife on his cheek. But he laughed—laughed, spitting out the blood from the wound, and it is not in the nature of women to deny strength in a man. Though I still fought in the following days, my heart ran not with my hands. *Si*, the ashes of our village were no more than cold before they were plucking leaves to make Indian salve for his wound—the traitorous hands that should have driven in the knife when he slept, in the later time, with my head in the hollow of his shoulder.

"But they did not. They lay, these traitorous hands, through the soft nights—the two of them in one of his—and soon the strong, warm clasp squeezed the pain and hate out of my heart. I forgot—forgot till a stir of life quickening within me disrupted my dream, aroused me to knowledge that I—a woman of the Yaquis—was about to give birth to a Mexican child. Then, in the horror of it, I arose and slipped away in the night to the Yaqui villages in the far hills, and when my child was born

they took him for a Yaqui, and he grew up the best and strongest of the brood I bore in the following years.

"A young tiger among wolves, he grew up thinking himself wolf, and on the day that he escaped the net that gathered all the others in, the fury of the robbed she wolf burned out of my heart the last memory of his birth time. It was my hand that slipped the leash, set him upon the trail of his blood kin; and through all the long years of revenge I never once thought of it—the thing I fled from into the hills.

"Yet was it not dead. When, an hour ago, he told how his, the hand of the son, had loosed a bullet at the back of the father, it leaped as a wind puff lifts the flame out of hot ashes. *Si*, I had thought to fly from it, but it is come upon me again in the gray of the years, for this day that stalk that sprang from that red seed will shed its leaves and die."

It had come out of her with the sough and sigh of the desert winds to which her life had run in tune, and as the last word died she drew her shawl again about her head. Delivered in the metaphor so natural in an Indian, its tenor left the superintendent a little puzzled. Once his lips opened to speak; then, shaking his head, he beckoned the auditor to come away.

"I'm not quite clear as to her meaning," he said, outside. "I gathered that she had concealed from her son the fact that his father was a Mexican until, by some freak of chance, he fired upon him from ambush the other day. But it is no use bothering her any more. She'd only say it again in the same way. But what a situation! All these years the man has been killing off Mexicans, only to find, in the end, that he is one himself. No wonder he was nursing a grouch. I suppose he has gone out into the hills to have it out with himself. But he'll be back in a few days; and it will all work out for the best, for now he will *have* to settle down."

Only one-half of the superintendent's guess approached the truth. By the

time that he and the auditor settled down to their books the thunder of the stamps was already faint in the Yaqui's ears, for, once away from the mine, he struck a pace that carried him across the *haciendas* and into the heart of the opposite hills midway of the afternoon. It still lacked an hour of sundown when he drew his rifle and pistol from under the rock slide.

Leaning on the gun, he stood for a little while thereafter looking back at the cave; then, with a shake of the head, he lifted his eyes to the mountain above. A stark peak, save for one lone tree, bare as on the day some earth convulsion lifted it out of the boiling sea, its sunburned crest thrust up like a lance of gold into the fluff of white and sky-blue above.

In the days before the Americanos came to Santa Gertrudis, it had been a Yaqui outlook—just as the cave had afforded safe harborage in the cañon below; and as he now began to climb its steep sides every bush and crag recalled some memory of secret ambush or rendezvous.

The very heat that blazed out from the calcined surfaces of huge rock walls struck him with the warm hand of an old friend. The outlook, when at last he gained the top, raised the march of past seasons, plash of great rains, sharp thunders, clear views of winter, yellow flights of the sandstorms across the desert. It was undoubtedly the feeling of it all that prompted his mutter:

"A good place."

The sun was now halfway under the horizon, and, from the plains below, brown shadows were slowly climbing the hills. Until they touched his feet he leaned on his rifle, so still and silent that he did not disturb the baldheaded eagle that had just homed from afar to its nest of sticks in the tree above.

Having fed its hungry brood, the great bird was settling down for the night, but rose with a frightened squawk at a sudden report, and the great winged shape swooping through the dusk might easily have been the man's fierce spirit.

For the Yaqui had got his last Mexican.



IN MUSICLAND

By William H. Armstrong

MUNICH had three weeks and three days of deluge overlapping from June into July last year, when suddenly, on a Sunday, there came a burst of sunshine, fitful, obscured at moments by flying clouds, but promising of better things. By afternoon from every quarter the inhabitants flocked forth; if any remained at home it was only the bed-ridden. Exposition, beer garden, and park sent out the sound of violins, of woodwind, and of brass; the summer musical life of the Bavarian stronghold had been resumed with a crash, as if the long-smoldering, rain-soaked fuse had finally made good and fired the charge.

In sodden days prior to that travelers, making of Munich a kind of clearing house for routes in all directions, had held the streets in steady, dripping ranks. The Germans came because the calendar showed it to be holiday time, a season which no downpour could postpone, and the Americans and English because at Oberammergau a Passion Play was in progress, through which the characters, profane and sacred, struggled in nipping air and with red noses. But on that first welcome day of fickle sunshine the mass of outsiders vanished, as if by miracle, leaving the Münchner behind to hold sole sway.

Above the café terrace at the exposition, horse chestnuts shook the last lingering drops from off their leaves; under white umbrellas covering white

tables, the glow of color in hats, gowns, and uniforms became each moment gayer; behind the columns of the portico an orchestra went temptingly from Waldteufel to Strauss, the conductor flourishing his violin with all the airs and pantomime appropriated by Viennese leaders since Johann, of waltz fame, first caught the eye with them.

Stray groups withdrew, and others took their places, but in great part the mass remained unchanged; day would merge into night that brought electric lights in clusters and festoons to find the same listeners lingering. A stronger contrast could not well exist than that between them and the Parisian, who must have another's clever verses sung to help amuse him, while the Münchner needs only instrumental accompaniment to the self-made gayety of his own chatter.

The players in this instance were Viennese to a man, and it is oftener from Vienna, and from all parts of Germany rather than Munich proper, that café bands there are recruited. No tempting offer from foreign parts could wrench them from Bavarian surroundings, for in Munich they find a life that, in their wisdom, they well know to be elsewhere missing.

The outdoor musical life of Munich plays a rôle both gay and tender. In its concert halls more serious works leave another sort of impression; but without, in the open, numbers too light

or too threadbare for those other hours are given a hearing. There the life that is old is brought into close contact with the young life of the town. And so the things already dear through association to the one grow dear to the other, leaving a degree of sentiment over for those playing them, until melody and musician find place side by side within the common heart.

The kaiser himself once pronounced the Munich Rathaus the most ideal spot in Europe as setting for the midday regimental concert. And surely there is about it a perpetual holiday aspect; its stone façade clustered with statues, elaborate fretwork, and pinnacle; touches of gilt on wrought-iron grillwork; everywhere tracings in bright tints, for the Münchner loves color as ardently as any Italian.

This splendid reproduction of old German architecture, followed within as elaborately in the courtyard open to the sky, gives the band a medieval background. Nowhere are such fantastic walls as those of that court—gargoyles, towers, gables, unexpected, jutting corners. Into the great open space between them the brilliantly uniformed band sweeps at noon from under a low, deep archway, and in dramatic fashion, against which the entrance of the band in "Faust" is but a meager, tawdry circumstance.

As for the men of the soldier band, they play as ardently as if they were not presently to go dinnerless, because the concert outlasts an hour set by barrack regulation for that function. And in that courtyard brasses take on a rich resonance, reeds a wonderful purity of tone under the open sky. Not a note in the lacelike counterpoint of Mozart's "Magic Flute" overture, not a shade of color in modern works are lost. I cannot explain it, I only give it as a note to architects, the best of them, who build concert halls only to erect failures. Between those solid, roofless walls, so fantastically erratic, so apparently liable to create echo, and yet echoless, the acoustics are perfect. There can be but one deduction; you may shape and ornament walls as you will, so long as they are

solid, the main trouble must lie in sound-destroying formation of ceilings.

At certain periods each higher class military band makes a tour, sometimes extending throughout Germany. Again it travels the circle of those summer expositions, numerously unimportant, except on the side of social intercourse to which the German is so given, but always under royal patronage, which lends itself to advertising with a freeness quite astounding.

If you would find genuine example of the Munich reciprocity between audience and musician, visit one summer night the Löwenbräu Garten when some favorite band is playing. Town life is there mainly in evidence, with few strangers present, and the Münchner casts off reserve for unrestrained enthusiasm in consequence. The first night of an opera season could not be of fuller expectancy. There is a quiet charged with excitement as the assembling crowd settles down at tables and over stone mugs capped with foam. The garden itself a place of moods, sad and unoccupied in dripping weather, invitingly cool on sunny afternoons, is friendly with a glow of lights at night.

If the evening be a gala one, no flaring poster, only an announcement card, is needed to bring the mass together. Every rank of life, civil and military, is represented, and the women of their families are with them. The musicians, straggling on the stage in groups, are greeted with applause, and answering smiles light their familiar faces. For the conductor, when he strides out, is kept the heartiest welcoming of all.

Military music has of late years made tremendous progress in Germany; its favorite bands are fine ones. The woodwind is of a wonderful facility; the brasses sonorous; response as a unit is flexible to every stroke of the baton. The whole country is represented at the music desks; a gold braid, showing long years of military service, is on almost every sleeve, men who have ended their term required by law, and reënlisted in some other section, finding concertizing in a regimental band both a profitable and a happy thing.

On such evenings at the Löwenbräu it was my good luck to be in company with university graduates and students, due in Munich for a summer meeting of their several corps. To them the band was an old friend; so was the frau bearing pretzels tied invitingly in bunches; so was her companion, with a huge dish piled with radishes; a third, known to them immemorially by nickname as "the kaiserin," carried dripping stone mugs in marvelous number. She, once spying among us a lawyer known the breadth of Germany, exclaimed. "*Grüss Gott, Max!* I haven't seen you for fifteen years. How are you?" To her he remained still a boy.

American music finds place in those concerts, for every German band program contains a Sousa march, often by another man, wherever a march is played. John Philip Sousa has revolutionized the march music of the world. Years ago, when his band played one of his own Suites in Berlin, a local critic wrote that the first movement was "The Washington Post March," played allegro; the second, "The Washington Post March," played andante; and the third "The Washington Post March," played prestissimo. But Berliners straightway began to imitate the Sousa style, and have not stopped since.

In Paris cafés, Sousa mélodies are stolen bodily to make French songs; in Vienna, the march à la Sousa is as high in favor as their own waltz; in England, they take a nip at his swing and rhythm as a mouse at cheese, delicately, leaving small impression, but an improvement upon the time when the best march that they had to fight to was the one which Sullivan wrote as setting to a hymn. Sousa's originality has been strong enough and fresh enough to color both the popular and march product of all Europe.

The fact that he is spoken at the Löwenbräu by a German does not lessen enthusiasm, for, if the imitation is apt, it invariably helps bring abandon. Conductor and musicians reap their share of reward in it, and the picture-card vender is overwhelmed with business, for at many tables one will write a card and

all will sign it, Munich fashion, that absent ones may know next morning that they have been missed.

Another strata of the musical life of Munich in summer gardens, and in cafés in winter, is made up of the peasant player from the Bavarian Highlands or the Lowlands bordering on the Danube. Musical he is, and in his way a humorist, for there are inimitable comedians among them; and he has, too, a gayety in facing audiences that always wins a smile, even though behind it the routine may bore him.

Unlike the wandering Swiss, who promptly returns to the starting point, once he has scraped a competence together, the Bavarian peasant musician generally leaves "Home, Sweet Home" out of his repertory. His forsaken roof-tree would likely bring him death from ennui if he went back to it. Almost always he is independent of music—a shoemaker, a carpenter, or of some kindred trade. During the day he works at his calling, and at night, in the quaint dress of his district, he earns in public a few marks and much pleasure.

The members of these bands drift together oftener by accident; from the same section, aliens, lonely among strangers, they meet to make music. Chance brings presently an opportunity to appear before a wider circle, perhaps in the program which precedes an artists' ball. Their costume, their naïve, unconscious freedom, handsome faces, stalwart figures, and an inborn talent for song and instrument, carry them into favor overnight. From then on they become part of the town's gayety.

If they discard the simple life, there is one reminder of it which they hold fast to as a fetish, the silver buttons strung in double rows on their gay, velvet waistcoats, and handed down for generations.

"My buttons have been in the family since the seventeenth century," said a Lowlander one night. Calling a comrade, he asked: "How old are yours?" The answer was: "From the sixteenth." And they were, coins bearing the imprint of ancient Bavarian bishops. "Then your family dates a hun-

dred years ahead of his?" I queried. "Yes," he replied, with peasant reticence, a stolid pride creeping across his face.

Some of these men have grown as familiar to the Munich public as the automatons performing at given intervals on the Rathaus clock. Ranks are thinned by the unsparing hand that moves across the dial of years, new figures refill them, but, after long absence, if you wander back, a number of well-known ones will still be there, still giving the old songs, with the old-time gayety.

Munich comradeship, unchanging, too, will, during intermissions, prompt groups to lean on the hand rail about the stage, chat, ask for this song or that, and give invitation to one man or another which brings him in his peasant garb to mingle with the audience. Without any telling, the supple-moving maid has brought him light brew or dark—she knows his taste—and sets before him a glass so tall that all others are dwarfed beside it. Then, when the program starts up again, every one joins lustily in choruses memorized from uncounted hearings.

There are remote Bavarian villages which send out wandering musicians to travel the world; three-fourths of their male population are absent for a year; some, perhaps, for years at a stretch. The majority, however, return on the name day of their parish church, to feast and play the grand seigneur. Their route through Germany lies mainly by way of hamlets and little towns; but Munich, their adored metropolis, is sure at one time or another to find them playing in the quiet inn gardens of its suburbs. Their babies' future fitness for a wander life is tested in the cradle by an old tradition. A cornet and a watch are offered them. If their hands clutch at the instrument they will become musicians; if at the timepiece they will prove scamps.

Born to a fate of nomad music-making, all Europe, as well as Germany, America, and Australia, knows them.

Their mountainside in its unfriendly barrenness has driven them afield. While they are gone the women of the family tend the homes and such scant gardens as a niggard soil affords. The travelers go out mostly in bands of three, sometimes of four, two trumpets, a clarinet, and a bass clarinet. Everything in their repertoires is played either in march or waltz time. If a woman is with them she sings, and they earn more. They live simply, save money, and almost invariably get on happily together. Once having tested the joys of a more plentiful existence, they never forsake it until old age, brought the earlier by beating storms, enforces retirement. A new generation from their village takes their places, and they stay behind to dilate on past adventures, and prepare a yet younger brood to flit out.

A waif type, wandering alone, guitar or zither his sole friend, frequents the little gardens where workmen congregate, join in his song, dole him a few spare pfennige, and see him vanish with the night. Sometimes, if he has a trade, he may linger on to play in one locale, but thirst for change is apt to send him off again as suddenly as April winds veer. Music and philosophy are with him inherent; his experience, as one among them told it, is likely the experience of all.

"If one by chance has a paid engagement, one goes by rail, third class. The country looks as fresh through its windows as when one travels first. And if one has no engagement one walks. The peasants are always kind; like us, they are poor. A piece or two, and one has a bed. Many a fellow travels alone summer and winter through. Snow is bad, it climbs through shoe soles. But everything comes right in the sunshine."

That is just it, in sunshine everything comes right; and if he wanders away from Munich, it is generally to wander back, for in the darkest weather they seem to keep sunshine on tap there in their hearts.

THE NEW IDEA PROPHET

By
Johnson Morton



FOR at best," declared Mrs. Belknap P. Brewster impressively, "I can be only a sort of signpost!"

She stood before a long line of ladies, of assorted ages, sizes, and shapes, that stretched across the hall.

She herself wore the unanimous costume of gray flannel Turkish trousers and long, loose waist of the same uncompromising material in which the rest were garbed; but with a difference! For it needed no second glance at her stout, aggressive figure, which, with firmly planted legs and widely extended arms, did offer a plump suggestion of her chosen simile, to show the professional in contrast to the amateur; the teacher confronting her pupils.

As a matter of fact, Mrs. Belknap P. Brewster's claim went further. On her appearance in town, under the patronizing ægis of Mrs. Launcelot Buttress, she had announced herself loudly as the "prophet of a New Idea," which, born in India, nurtured in Europe, and developed to its present perfection by herself in the middle West, she was prepared to elucidate—a fetching word—for the benefit of her sex at large.

Now, at the close of the first meeting of this crowded class, which, at the rate of one hundred dollars a head, represented the summit of her success, she had explained the modus operandi of the system.

"It is you who must do the work," she went on, with an embracing smile, "after I have pointed out the way. Remember what I have said about the duties we owe our beautiful sex—our divine obligation to womanhood—remember we have come to consider that the breath is, so to speak, the 'ne plus ultra,' or, better still, the 'sine qua non' of existence; controlling and developing power! Do not forget, while we are on this topic, that I consider the diaphragm and the ribs of the utmost importance; and, most of all, do not fail to remember the necessity of concentrating your mental thought on your physical welfare, for only in this way can we obtain that wonderful retroactive movement—you will recall my words on this subject—by which the body, which is given us in more or less perfect forms"—Mrs. Brewster beamed blandly down the varied ranks before her—"can produce its effect on the mind and through that—I hope I make myself clear—control the forces, all of them physical in the best and truest sense of the word, that tend to utility, accomplishment, altruism, happiness, and, last but not least, immortality!

"Now, I hope I may not seem self-centered—we must not lose sight of the fact that the individual sinks to nothingness in comparison with the cause—if I tell you what this system of life that I am privileged to expound to you

to-day has done for me. I am fifty-two years of age."

Mrs. Brewster held herself at her full height; then, throwing back her head and placing the palms of her hands at her waist, she drew in a deep and chest-swelling breath.

"Fifty-two years of age." She repeated her confession sonorously *on* this breath as she emitted it slowly, until she had sunk to her normal proportions. "And look at me, ladies. Why, I have the freshness and vitality of a young girl. There are no wrinkles on the satin of my skin, my eye has lost nothing of its luster, and my figure retains intact the pliant suppleness of youth."

There were certain of her listeners, trivial souls it must be confessed, who, at this point of her remarks, struggled with a strong desire to laugh. Mrs. Tony Ellery, indeed, so far forgot herself as to grow very red and to give vent to a suspicious sound; but, an instant later, she was rebuked to dignity by the glance which she met from the serious eyes of Mrs. Manton Waring, who stood next her at the very end of the line.

Mrs. Waring, all attention and interest, had failed wholly to remark the palpable incongruity between Mrs. Belknap P. Brewster's delicate appreciation of her own points and the solid reality of her appearance. She followed up her look with the pressure of a restraining hand on her neighbor's shoulder, and regarded her sternly.

"Hush," she said, "Mrs. Brewster will hear you. I can't see anything to laugh at!"

And the prophet, glancing with meaning in that direction, looked approvingly as she rounded her concluding sentences.

"So it is just as possible for all of you—I except no one—to attain these same results. Read my book diligently—it will be on sale after the class at the low price of two dollars a copy—attend these meetings regularly, practice the exercises faithfully in private, and by the habitual use of what I have so aptly called Breath Power, you will, every

one of you, become, in an incredibly short time, healthy, sweet-souled, and beautiful."

As Mrs. Waring elbowed her way through the throng that surrounded Mrs. Belknap P. Brewster at the close of the exercises, she was agreeably surprised to receive an especial mark of favor from that lady. A large hand released temporarily the bunch of bills, that it was acquiring rapidly in exchange for books, to seize her own in a hearty grasp, while a richly cordial voice spoke her name.

"So glad to see you, Mrs. Waring," it remarked, and then added, as the prophet turned to the others in a comprehensive embrace: "I'm going to beg this little lady to remain, for a word with me, a few minutes after the rest of you have gone!"

Ordinarily it would not have pleased Mrs. Waring at all to be called in public a "little lady"; for when one is but five feet two and reaches only to one's husband's shoulder, a diminutive, outside the family, at least, is particularly trying. But, somehow, she did not mind now, for it is rather pleasant than otherwise to be singled out for especial attention in any fashion; and so she gave a dimpling assent to the request, and lingered behind until the others had departed to burst from their flannel cocoons to the butterfly wings of civilization.

It was then that Mrs. Belknap P. Brewster, rushing impulsively forward, seized Mrs. Waring's hands, both of them this time, and, smiling widely, spoke again in tones of effusive emotion.

"Oh, I am so grateful to you, dear little lady! Why, of course I saw what happened a few minutes ago! I have eyes! It was good and brave of you to rebuke thoughtless levity! How often I have suffered cruelly for it! Now you must let me thank you, thank you with all my heart!"

From such a beginning it was not at all difficult to leap into sudden intimacy with Mrs. Brewster; and Mrs. Waring, after half an hour, found herself not only in possession of the sad facts of

the prophet's eventful and far from satisfactory life, but so full of sympathy that she burned to alleviate it in some way, however small, so as the talk turned to the loneliness of the urban Sunday—a day that Mrs. Brewster confessed she found depressing—a hospitable idea sprang to life in Mrs. Waring's brain.

"Oh, do come on Saturday and spend this very next one with me in the country," she cried impulsively. "We're already out of town, and I know you'll find it restful. Do say yes." She grew insistent at a hint of polite hesitation in the other's manner. "Why, it will be a kindness! I'm all alone, because my husband's gone South till Monday. Oh, you *must* come! I shan't let you say no!"

By Sunday evening, it must be confessed that Mrs. Waring had rather tired of her visitor. Saturday with a motor ride, after her arrival, an early dinner, and a prompt desire for sleep on the part of the guest, had gone very well, indeed. Mrs. Brewster's refusal to go to church, while disappointing in a way, had left Sunday morning free for a talk, during which she elucidated the principle of the "Idea" in a fashion that, though it puzzled somewhat her listening hostess, had not failed to absorb her attention; and the afternoon had been pleasantly occupied with a visitor or two to whom, at tea time, it was most amusing to display a lion much inclined to roar.

But now, when the ladies had seated themselves in the drawing-room after a rather silent supper, Mrs. Waring felt that conversation flagged indeed. She was feeling bored, tired, and nervous as well, for the day had been sultry, and through the open window she could see constant flashes of lightning. Heat lightning Mrs. Brewster had called it casually; but one can never tell when the subtle change to the dangerous variety may take place, and Mrs. Waring, on the edge of her chair, kept counting, in anticipation of the thunder that she dreaded more than anything else on earth.

To add to the discomfort of the occasion, Mrs. Brewster, when she chose to speak at all, was inclined to air her views on religion, which seemed, to Mrs. Waring's orthodox soul, of a character little short of appalling. Certainly it was no time, when the most direful forces of nature were in operation, even to listen to doubts of such things as the future life; and the fact that, in addition to the expression of her dreadfully advanced views, Mrs. Brewster was knitting, actually on Sunday and in the face, as it were, of a thunderstorm, about deprived her hostess of the power of speech.

At the stroke of nine, however, came relief; for Mrs. Brewster herself, stirring a yawn, looked up at the clock and suggested bed.

"I must return to my labors so early to-morrow, after the delightful visit," she announced as she arose, "that I'm going to make the most of my last night."

And Mrs. Waring, noting with satisfaction that the obnoxious knitting was replaced in its bag, and fancying that, in consequence, the lightning flashed less brilliantly, went upstairs with her guest, and, after a parting, colored with a good deal of enthusiasm to atone for the dullness of the evening, found herself at last in her own room, where she hurriedly sought the haven of her bed, and presently fell asleep.

She awoke suddenly with a sharp sense of alarm. The room was still dark, and from the mantelpiece a shrill clock struck two. She sat bolt upright, and, as the last stroke ceased, was conscious of a strange, unusual sound, which seemed to come from below. She grew cold with apprehension, and listened intently.

The sound stopped; she breathed more freely. It began again; she shrank with fresh terror.

Twas a picking, grating, rasping noise that she heard above the beating of her own heart; and, all at once, its significance flashed upon her. What she had dreaded all her life almost as much

as thunderstorms had really happened. There was a *burglar* in the house!

With a disposition to bury herself forever beneath the bedclothes came a wild longing for her husband's presence and a stir of resentment that he was not by her side. Oh, for the bold brain, the broad back, and the strong right arm of Manton Waring! Why had he deserted her? Why should a man ever leave his wife?

Suddenly the sound was succeeded by another of a different sort, but equally unmistakable and convincing; the clatter made by the accidental hitting together of pieces of silver. She understood! The burglar was in the dining room! Even now he was taking her grandmother's tea service that she had insisted on bringing to the country against her husband's advice. Why had Manton Waring *allowed* her to have her own way? This was the result; *his* fault entirely!

Then followed a silence more unbearable than sound; for a superlative dread fell upon her. At this instant the burglar was probably on his way to the second floor! Was not that the creaking of a stair? Oh, horror!

Realizing that bed was no longer safe, Mrs. Waring slipped quickly to the floor, and, flinging a dressing gown about her shoulders, fled through her bathroom to the chamber beyond. Its emptiness was terrifying. But as she reached a door at the other end, she remembered with relief that a small passage led to the room occupied by Mrs. Brewster. A sudden sense of security seized her as she found that lady's door unlocked, and an instant later she was bending over the bed. Even in slumber, the sight of Mrs. Brewster was reassuring—how big, and strong, and capable she looked as she lay there drawing her breath; a trifle noisily, perhaps, but in a friendly fashion that had about it a pleasant sense of the masculine.

Mrs. Waring's grasp and her hoarse and frightened whisper, "There's a burglar in the house," roused Mrs. Brewster to immediate action. She fairly leaped to the floor.

"Where? Where?" she asked.

"Downstairs, I think, though I'm not sure; but I know he's coming up here now. Oh, do *something*!" appealed Mrs. Waring, clinging to her arm.

For answer, Mrs. Brewster strode to the fireplace, and, seizing a poker, advanced to the door.

"Follow me," she commanded. "We must head him off!"

In the shadow of that vast, white figure, Mrs. Waring walked tremblingly. It did not occur to her to disobey, for she realized that the prophet of the "New Idea" was certainly not lacking in courage. They reached the head of the stairs; then, for an instant, they paused to peer down into the darkness. Nothing was to be seen, and the silence was unbroken.

"There's nobody there," Mrs. Brewster turned to whisper reassuringly. "I guess you must have had a bad dream, little lady. Still," she added, "now that we're up, it won't do any harm to have a thorough investigation. It is my intention to go over this house from cellar to attic."

With these disconcerting words, she started briskly for the stairs, and Mrs. Waring, scarcely daring to follow, and not daring at all to remain behind, went timorously after her. Halfway down, at the broad landing, Mrs. Brewster stopped abruptly—and Mrs. Waring, her heart in her mouth, fancied that she could see something moving on the floor below.

The next instant she was reduced almost to stupefaction by a loud scream from Mrs. Brewster, who seemed suddenly to rise in the air, hang there for a moment, and then, with arms outspread, fling herself upon a dark figure as it started toward them. There was a fall, an interrupted cry, the sound of a smothered groan, mingled with a jangle of rolling silver plate!

"Quick, quick!" gasped the prophet of the "New Idea." "Turn on the lights, and then go and telephone! Hurry all you can; but I rather guess I'll be able to sit on him till you get the police!"

"Of course, I did as she asked me;

but I used my own judgment, for I saw that Mrs. Brewster—Mrs. Belknap P. Brewster; both of her grandfathers were college presidents, you remember I told you—was much too excited to be depended on. So I begged her to control herself all she could, and I went straight to the telephone, because it seemed to me the thing to do *first*."

It was Monday afternoon, and Mrs. Waring, perched on an arm of her husband's chair, was in the midst of a detailed account of the events of the preceding night.

"Well, I rang and rang," she went on, "and jiggled that funny, little holder thing till I thought I'd broken it, and in about an hour, I should say—I was desperate—that person at central finally managed to answer! I don't know whether it's a man or a woman there, for the voice is queer; but I take it for granted that it's a woman, because she's so hateful, and I want you to promise to report her when you go to the village.

"She was probably asleep, you say? Why, Manton Waring, why *should* she sleep all night? I've always thought that telephone people were like watchmen, and that was the reason they were so well paid. At any rate, when I said 'Please send me the police at once,' she asked me, rather impertinently, I think, who I was, which proves that she's stupid as well as lazy, you *must* acknowledge.

"Finally she managed to connect me with the station house, but I could only hear a horrid buzzing. I dare say *they* were all asleep, too. Haven't you noticed that people in villages never seem able to hold up their heads after nine o'clock? And Mrs. Brewster kept calling out, and begging me to make haste, for she was afraid she'd killed the burglar—he was so still—which was natural, I suppose; though, at the time, it didn't seem any too logical, because if she *had*, what should we have needed the police for?

"At last I got it—the station, I mean—and that pleasant, red-faced man, who was so civil when I thought I'd lost my pearl pin, answered. Why, I knew

him by his *voice*, of course! How silly you are! And I must say he was very nice, for he promised to send a posse—I hadn't an idea what that meant, but it sounded reassuring—at once. So I begged Mrs. Brewster—she was still sitting on the burglar in the hall, and I didn't like to go there after what she had said—to be patient and calm just a little longer and all would be well.

"But she answered rather sharply. I must say: 'I wish you'd turn on the lights as I asked you to do some time ago.' So, of course, to do this I *had* to go into the hall then; but I looked the other way as I pressed the little button by the library door. Manton Waring, no light came! I tried a hundred times, and then it flashed over me that, in the country, the electricity is always turned off at midnight. Mrs. Brewster was getting agitated and impatient. She was quite unreasonable, too.

"'This man has been stunned,' she said; 'that's the reason I've been able to sit on him. But now I'm terribly afraid he's coming to, and I've simply *got* to see him.'

"'But there is no light, I tell you,' I assured her very gently. 'Do you think I'd better telephone to the electric company?'

"'Don't be an idiot,' snapped Mrs. Brewster rudely, 'but get a match!'

"A match! You know, yourself, it's as much as your life's worth to find one in a house with electric light under the best of circumstances; and here I was in pitch blackness, not knowing which way to turn.

"'Hurry, hurry!' screamed Mrs. Brewster.

"Luckily, as you've always said it did, Manton, my mind worked quickly; and I suddenly remembered that there ought to be matches—the kind in cards that are so smelly—in a tin box back of the range in the kitchen; and so I marched straight through the dining room and out there after them.

"Of course, there wasn't a sign of a servant. I found out this morning that they were scared to death, and had locked themselves into their rooms. I got the matches—a package of them—

and, when I reached the hall, there was the greatest confusion.

"The burglar had come to and was beginning to 'grapple'—isn't that what you call it?—with Mrs. Brewster, who was doing her part, I must say, taking deep breaths, and muttering: 'Give me strength, give me strength!' From outside, on the veranda, came a loud sound of feet and voices. I heard my nice, red-faced policeman, and saw the flash of lanterns, and I knew 'twas the posse at last!

"A posse means, after all, only two others beside yourself. So I opened the door as quickly as I could, and, just as they came in, I struck a whole car of those matches. It blazed up beautifully, and shone full in the burglar's face; and then something perfectly unbelievable happened! For, to my astonishment and horror, I looked straight at the man, and *saw that the burglar was you!*

"I think I screamed 'That's my husband!' And then, of course, I fainted—it was the least I could do. I remember nothing more until I came to myself with you on one side—your face beginning to swell already, but it was nothing to what it is to-day—and Mrs. Brewster apologetic in her nightgown on the other, with the red-faced policeman holding my head.

"And you were all laughing; though

I couldn't see—nor can I now—anything at all to laugh *at!*

"Now, Manton, you've explained about coming home yesterday unexpectedly so as to surprise me, and going into the dining room for a drink, finding grandmother's silver there and coming upstairs with it; but you *haven't* explained how a great, strong man like you could be knocked down, made unconscious, and bruised—indeed, you *are*. I wish you'd look in the glass, you're a *sight*—by a mere woman!"

But Mr. Waring, spurning the mirror, shook his head whimsically, and interrupted his wife.

"Don't call Mrs. Belknap P. Brewster a mere woman; anything but that! I'm rather inclined to like her. She's far and away the most admirable of the long line of freaks you've unearthed! She explained everything to me this morning. 'Twas Breath Power did the business, Gussie; and as Breath Power seems to be the only thing that has ever downed the amateur champion middle-weight boxer of his time, and damaged his classic features so that he can't show his face at his office for a day or two, I'm inclined to think there's something in it. Keep on with Mrs. Brewster, Gussie. Have her down here again when I'm at home. By Jove, I believe I'll take a course of lessons in Breath Power myself!"



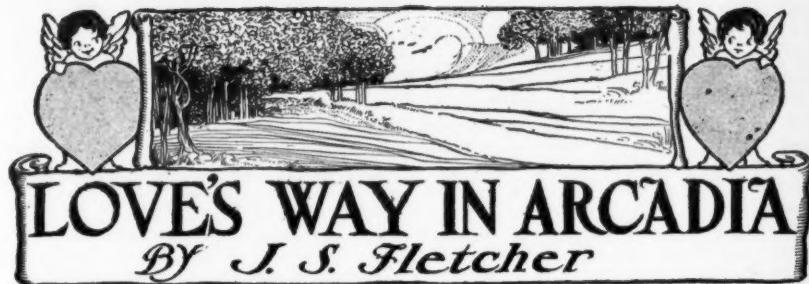
THE DEAREST PLACE

I KNOW the dearest little place,
All sunny fair,
And there's no other spot I fain
Would go, but there!

"Oh, is it sea, or hill, or stream,
Or desert wide?"
You ask. "And will its days be sweet
And calm beside?"

And then I laugh. "I do not know,
Nor do I care,
The dearest spot, an' you come, too,
Is—anywhere!"

CLAIRE WALLACE FLYNN.



LOVE'S WAY IN ARCADIA

BY J. S. Fletcher

SWEETBRIAR FARM, when I went to stay there that summer, seemed to me a crystallization of all the storied sweets of Arcadia as one reads of them in the poets and the dreamers. The house itself was some five hundred years old; it had diamond-paned windows framed in ivy; on one side where there was no ivy the gray walls were covered with clematis, and honeysuckle, and jessamine. There was a walled garden, gay with blossom; there was an orchard where the blossom fell on lush grass in which golden daffodils sprang up. At the end of the orchard ran a stream, brown and mysterious, in whose deeper pools lurked speckled trout. All about the house, and the garden, and the orchard the birds sang, for the nesting and breeding season was scarce over; and at night in a coppice close by a nightingale sang its heart out to the rising moon.

Within the old farmstead everything was as Arcadian as without. My sitting room—otherwise the best parlor—was a dream of old oak, old china, old pewter, and old pictures. It smelled always of roses and lavender—you could smoke the strongest tobacco there without offense, for the flower scent was more powerful. A dream, too, was my sleeping chamber, with its lavender-kept linen, its quaint chintz hangings, and its deep window seat, in which one could sit of a night to see the moonlight play upon garden and orchard, or of an early morning to watch the dew-starred lawn sparkle in the fresh sunlight.

And once free of the house there was the great kitchen to admire, with its mighty hearth, its old brass and pewter, its ancient grandfather clock, its flitches and hams hanging, side by side with bundles of dried herbs, from the oaken rafters; and beyond it the dairy, a cool and shadowy place, where golden butter was made out of snow-white cream; and beyond that again the deep, dungeonlike cellar, where stood the giant casks of home-brewed ale—nectar fit for the gods.

Nor were the folk who inhabited this Arcadia less interesting than the Arcadia itself. There was the old farmer, a fine specimen of an Englishman, with a face like the rising sun and an eye as blue as the cornflowers which grew in his hedgerows. There was his wife, a gay and bustling lady of sixty youthful years, who was never without a smile and a cheery word, and who, like, her good man, had but one regret, which each bore with admirable resignation—that the Lord had never blessed them with children. There were the people who came and went about the farm—ruddy-faced and brown-faced men, young maidens, and old crones, children in all stages of youthfulness. And there was also John William, and there was Susan Kate.

John William Marriner—who was usually spoken of as John Willie—was the elder of the two laborers who lived in the house. He was a youth of apparently one and twenty years of age, and as straight and strong as a promising ash sapling. Whether in his Sunday

suit of blue serge, or in his workaday garments of corduroy, John Willie was a picture of rustic health—his red cheeks always glowed, his blue eyes were always bright; he had a Gargantuan appetite, and when he was not smiling he was whistling or singing. Up with the lark and at work all day, he spent his evenings in the company of Susan Kate.

Susan Kate was the maid of all work at Sweetbriar Farm—a handsome, full-blown English rose of nineteen, with cherry cheeks and a pair of large, liquid, sloe-black eyes which made her white teeth all the whiter. It was an idyl in itself to see Susan Kate—whose surname was Sutton—milking the cows or feeding the calves out of a tin bucket; it was still more of an idyl to watch her and John William hanging over the orchard gate of an evening, the day's work behind them and the nightingale singing in the neighboring copice.

It seemed to me that Mr. Marriner and Miss Sutton were certainly lovers, and that matrimony was in their view. Now and then they went to church together, Susan Kate carrying a clean handkerchief and a prayer book; John Willie carrying Susan Kate's umbrella.

Sometimes they went for walks on a Sunday afternoon. I more than once encountered them on these occasions, and curiously observed the manner of their love-making. We invariably met in shady lanes or woodland paths—Mr. Marriner in his Sunday suit, with some hedgerow flower in his buttonhole, invariably came first, bearing Miss Sutton's umbrella, with which he would occasionally switch the grass; Miss Sutton, very rosy-cheeked, followed at a distance of two yards. They never seemed to hold any discourse one with the other, but if they looked sheepishly conscious they were undeniably happy.

Into this apparent paradise suddenly entered a serpent.

There came into my sitting room one morning, for the purpose of laying the tablecloth for my breakfast, a Susan Kate whom I had certainly not seen before. This Susan Kate had evidently

spent a considerable part of the night in affliction; her eyes were red and heavy, and there was even then a suspicious quiver at the corners of her red and pouting lips. She set the plates and the knives and forks upon the table as if it was in her mind to do an injury to them.

"Why, Susan Kate!" said I. "What is the matter?"

Susan Kate's only immediate answer was to sniff loudly and to retire to the kitchen, whence she presently returned with a cold ham, uncarven as yet, and a crisp lettuce, either of which was a sight sufficient to cheer up the saddest heart. But Susan Kate was apparently indifferent to any creature comforts. She sniffed again, and disappeared again, and came back with the eggs, and the toast, and the tea.

"I'm afraid, Susan Kate," said I, with all the dignified gravity of middle age, "I'm afraid you are in trouble."

Susan Kate applied a corner of her apron to her left eye as she transferred a bowl of roses from the sideboard to the middle of the breakfast table. Then she found her tongue, and I noticed that her hands trembled as she rearranged my cup and saucer.

"It's all that there Lydia Lightowler!" she burst out, with the suddenness of an April shower. "A nasty, spiteful thing!"

I drew my chair to the table.

"And who is Lydia Lightowler, Susan Kate?" I inquired.

Susan Kate snorted instead of sniffing.

"She's the new girl at the Spinney farm," she answered.

"Oh!" I said. "I didn't know they had a new girl at the Spinney farm. Where's Rebecca got to?"

"Becca's mother," replied Susan Kate, "was took ill, very sudden, and Becca had to leave. So this here Lydia Lightowler come in her place. And I wish she'd stopped where she came from, wherever that may be!"

I carved myself some delicate slices of ham.

"Ah!" I said. "And what has Lydia Lightowler done, Susan Kate?"

Susan Kate, whose stormy eyes were fixed on something in vacancy, and who was twisting and untwisting her apron, looked as if she would like to deliver her mind to somebody.

"Well, it isn't right if a young man's been making up to a young woman for quite six months that he should start carrying on with another!" she burst out at last. "It's more than what flesh and blood can stand."

"Quite so—quite so, Susan Kate," I said. "I quite appreciate your meaning. So John Willie—"

"I had to go on an errand to the Spinney farm last night," said Susan Kate, "to fetch a dozen of ducks' eggs it was, for the missis, and lo and behold who should I come across walking in Low Field Lane but John William and Lydia Lightowler—a nasty cat! So when I saw them I turned and went another way, and when John William came home, him and me had words, and this morning he wouldn't speak."

Here Susan Kate's tears began to flow afresh, and she suddenly threw her apron over her head and rushed from the parlor, no doubt to have a good cry in some of the many recesses of the ancient farmstead. It was plain that Susan Kate's heart was fashioned of the genuine feminine stuff.

In the course of my walk that morning I crossed the field in which Mr. John William Marriner was performing his daily task. Usually he sang or whistled all day long, and you could locate him by his melody at least a quarter of a mile away. But on this particular morning—a very beautiful one—John William was silent. He neither whistled nor sang, and when I got up to him I saw that his good-natured face was clouded over. In fact, John William looked glum, not to say sulky. He was usually inclined to chat, but upon this occasion his answers were short, and mainly monosyllabic, and I did not tarry by him. It was plain that John William was unhappy.

So there was a cloud over Arcadia. It appeared to increase in density. It was on a Tuesday when it first arose; after Wednesday Susan Kate wept no

more, but went about with dry eyes and her nose in the air, wearing an injured expression, while John William conducted his daily avocations in a moody and somber fashion. There were no more idyls of the orchard gate, and the farmhouse kitchen heard no merry laughter.

But on the next Monday morning Susan Kate, coming in to minister to my comfort, showed undoubted signs of grief—in fact, she looked as if she had cried her eyes out. And this time there was no need to invite her confidence, for she was only too anxious to pour out her woes.

"He walked her to church and home again last night!" exclaimed Susan Kate, nearly sobbing. "And they sat in the same pew, and sang out of the same book, same as what him and me used to do. And Bob Johnson, he saw them going down Low Field Lane, and he said they were hanging arms!"

"Dear, dear, dear!" said I. "This, Susan Kate, is getting serious."

"And it's the flower show at Cornborough this week," continued Susan Kate; "and he'd promised faithful to take me to it, but now I expect he'll take her—a nasty, mean, spiteful cat!"

"John William's conduct is most extraordinary," I said. "It is—yes, Susan Kate, it is reprehensible. Reprehensible!"

Susan Kate looked at me half suspiciously.

"I don't want to say nothing against John Willie," she said. "I know what's the matter with him. It's 'cause she dresses so fine—I saw her the first Sunday she came to church. And John Willie has such an eye for finery. But fine feathers make fine birds. I could be just as fine as what she is if I hadn't had to send my wages home to my mother when father broke his leg the other week. There's a hat in Miss Duxberry's window at Cornborough that would just suit me if I could only buy it. I'd like to see what John Willie would say then. 'Cause I'm as good looking as what she is, any day, for all she's got yellow hair!"

Then Susan Kate retired, presumably

to weep some more tears. But next morning she was all pride again.

"He's going to take her to the flower show," she said, as she set my breakfast before me. "He told Bob Johnson so last night, and Bob told me this morning."

"That's very sad, Susan Kate," I said. "A man should never break his promise. I'm surprised at John William. Hasn't he said anything to you about it?"

"We haven't spoken a word to each other since I gave him a piece of my mind about meeting him and her in Low Field Lane," said Susan Kate. "Nay, if he prefers her to me, he can have her, and welcome. I shall have naught no more to do with young men—they're that fickle!"

"Shall you go to the flower show, Susan Kate?" I inquired.

"No, I shan't!" snapped out Susan Kate. "They can have it to themselves, and then they'll happen be suited."

I walked into Cornborough during the day and discovered the whereabouts of Miss Duxberry's shop. It was not difficult to pick out the hat to which Susan Kate had referred, nor to realize that the girl had uncommonly good taste, and that it would look very well indeed on her wealth of raven hair. A label attached to its stand announced that it came from Paris, and that its price was a guinea—well, Susan Kate was well worthy of twenty-one shillings' worth of the latest Parisian fashion. Besides, there was John William's future to consider. So I dispatched the Paris hat to Sweetbriar Farm by a specially commissioned boy, who solemnly promised to remember with what duty he was charged.

That evening, after my return to the farm, and following upon my supper and a short conference with Susan Kate, I made my way to the courtyard, where Bob Johnson, the second "liver-in," was invariably to be found in his leisure moments, seated on the granary steps, and engaged either in plaiting whiplashes or making whistles out of ash twigs. Mr. Johnson was a stolid, heavy-faced, heavily fashioned young gentleman of twenty, with just sufficient

intelligence to know a plow from a harrow, and a firm conviction that the first duty of all well-regulated citizens was to eat and drink as much as possible. I gave him a cigar, at which he immediately began to suck as if it had been his own pipe, and passed the time of day with him.

"I suppose you'll be going to the flower show to-morrow?" I said.

Mr. Johnson shook his head.

"I'm sure I don't know," he answered. "The master's given me a half day off, but I'm none so great on them occasions. I doubt I shan't be present."

"Look here," I said, "would you like to earn half a sovereign?"

In order to emphasize this munificent offer, I drew the coin alluded to from my waistcoat pocket, and let the evening sun shine on it. Mr. Johnson's eyes twinkled, and he opened his mouth cavernously.

"How?" he said, and scratched his right ear.

"Now listen to me," I said! "To-morrow afternoon you're to put your best things on, and you're to take Susan Kate to the flower show. I'll give you two shillings to pay you in, and five shillings to take with you, and you shall have five shillings more when you come back."

Mr. Johnson scratched his ear again.

"Happen Susan Kate won't go," he said dubiously. "I've never walked her out anywhere."

"Susan Kate will go with you," I said decisively. "You be ready at three o'clock. And remember, you're not to say a word about this to anybody—not one word to John William. If you do, there'll be no ten shillings."

Mr. Johnson nodded his head.

"John Willie's going to the flower show," he remarked. "He's going with the new servant lass at the Spinney farm. Him and Susan Kate's fallen out. I say, mister!"

"Well?" I replied.

"I'm not a great one for lasses," said Mr. Johnson. "I don't want Susan Kate to think that I'm courting her. 'Cause I'm not going to."

"Susan Kate will quite understand matters," I said.

"Well, of course, ten shilling is ten shilling," murmured Mr. Johnson. "Otherwise I should have stopped at home."

At half-past two next day I took up a position in the garden from which I could see the setting out to the flower show. Presently issued forth John William, clad in his best and sporting a yellow tea rose. He marched valiantly away, but his face was gloomy and overcast.

A quarter of an hour later Miss Sutton and Mr. Johnson appeared round the corner of the house. The lady looked really handsome in her best gown and the new hat, and it was very evident to my jaded eyes that she knew her own worth and was armed for conquest. There were a flush on her cheek and a light in her eye which meant a good deal.

As for Mr. Johnson, who was attired in a black cutaway coat and slate-blue trousers, and wore a high collar and a billycock hat two sizes too small for him, he looked about as happy as if he were going to instant execution, and gazed miserably about him, as though seeking some deliverance. He walked a yard in the rear of Susan Kate—and Susan Kate seemed to regard him as one regards a dog at heel.

It might have been about an hour and a half afterward that Mr. Johnson came shambling down the meadow toward the farm—alone. He looked thoughtful, but infinitely relieved, as if some great weight had been lifted from his mind. I went out into the courtyard, and found him sitting on the wall of the well.

"You are soon home again," I remarked.

"Yes," he answered. "Yes. I didn't see no call to stop there—flower shows is naught in my line. Of course, I did what you said, mister—I took Susan Kate there, and went in with her, and walked her round."

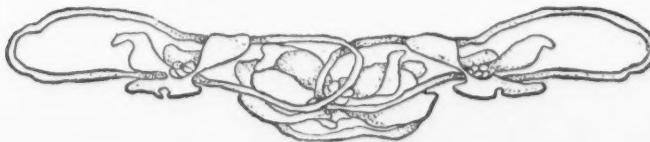
"And where is Susan Kate?" I inquired.

Mr. Johnson took off the too-small billycock, and scratched his head.

"Why," he said, "she's with John Willie. Ye see, when her and me got there, I walked her round the big tent, and we met John Willie and that there Lydia Lightowler, from the Spinney. Susan Kate took no notice of 'em, but passed 'em as if they were so much dirt, and John Willie he looked at us as black as thunder. Well, we went on, and we'd gotten to a quietish part when up comes John Willie by himself and gets hold of me by the arm. 'What does thou mean,' he says, fierce like, 'by walking my lass out? Thee hook it, else I'll break every bone in thy body.' I didn't know Susan Kate were thy lass now," I said. "I thought ye'd quarreled." "Hook it!" he says. "Oh, very well," I says. "Ye can settle it among yourselves." So I left Susan Kate with him, and came home. Ye might give me that other five shillings now, if ye please, mister."

Then Mr. Johnson retired to assume more comfortable attire, and I went for a walk to meditate. And, coming back in the soft twilight, I came across John William and Susan Kate. They were lingering at a wicket gate, and his arm was round her waist, and just as I caught sight of them he stooped and kissed her.

That, of course, accounted for the extraordinary happiness in Susan Kate's face when she brought in my supper.



The LADY on the PEDESTAL



by
Owen
Oliver

TEDDIE HOLDER'S manner of announcing his engagement was, perhaps, a trifle tactless. He blundered into the library, where the three aunts, who had been three mothers to him—as they were fond of stating—were sitting like three prim statuary. He blundered into a chair. Then he blundered into speech.

"I say," he remarked, with an apologetic grin, "you've heard me speak of Lady Alice Kennerton? Well—er—I'm engaged to her."

Aunt Sarah folded her embroidery and took off her spectacles, and said: "Oh!" Aunt Elizabeth closed her account book and took off her spectacles, and said: "What?" Aunt Jane blotted her letter carefully and wiped her pen, and said: "Indeed!" An interval of dubious silence followed.

"Considering that we have brought you up from the time that you were a baby," Aunt Sarah said at last, "we might reasonably have expected to be consulted before matters proceeded so far."

She looked to her sisters for support.

"Quite so," Aunt Elizabeth agreed.

"Certainly," said Aunt Jane.

"I didn't know I was going to do it till I did," Teddie apologized. "In fact—I didn't think I'd ever dare, because, you see, they're a thousand years old—the family, I mean—and they think more of that sort of thing in England than we do in America, and she always seemed like a—well, like a lady on a pedestal, you know."

"A lady on a pedestal!" Aunt Sarah repeated. She extended her hands as

if she called upon those present to witness the statement.

"I mean—different from ordinary people like us."

"I am not prepared," said Aunt Sarah stiffly, "to admit that Lady Alice Kennerton is a superior being to your Aunt Elizabeth or your Aunt Jane. I leave myself out of the question."

"I meant myself," Teddie explained. "I never thought she'd look at me. I was in an awful funk after I'd blurted it out, and I—I told her that I knew I wasn't good enough, but she—Well, she thought I was. I'll bring her round to see you to-morrow. You're sure to like her, because she's so—so ripping! You've been awfully good to me always. I've often meant to say so, only I'm not much of a chap for talking, you know. But I think it. Thank you, Aunt Sarah—and Aunt Betty—and Aunt Jane."

He kissed the old ladies blunderingly, and then he blundered out. He had been described by his old tutor as a huge, good-humored young bear, who looked clumsy, but wasn't. "I find him singularly likable," he had added. His aunt-mothers found him so, too.

All three aunt-mothers wiped their glasses carefully when he had gone, and put them on, and looked at one another. They shook their three heads.

"This will never do!" Aunt Sarah stated. "A perfect stranger!"

"No," said Aunt Elizabeth. "It will never do."

"To marry a stranger!" Aunt Jane bewailed.

They were always the chorus and Aunt Sarah the play.

"And go and live in England!" Aunt Elizabeth lamented.

"On our money," Aunt Jane added, with a viciousness that was unusual in her.

"We aren't obliged to leave it to him," Aunt Sarah pointed out, setting her thin, old lips in a straight line.

Aunt Elizabeth laughed bitterly.

"What's the use of talking like that, Sarah?" she protested. "You know perfectly well that, whatever he does, we shall leave what we have to him. After all—the boy was bound to be married some time."

"He wasn't bound to be married for his money," Aunt Sarah snapped. "*Our* money, as you said, Jane; or to go and do it without a word of warning or asking our advice; after what we've done for him! I know we shan't leave it away from him, but it would serve him right if we did."

"Don't blame the boy, Sarah," Aunt Jane entreated. "It's plain enough that he was trapped into it. He says himself that he did it without premeditation. 'A lady on a pedestal,' indeed! Every one knows that the Kennertons are as poor as they are stuck up. They brought her over here to marry money."

"She must be clever to catch him like that," Aunt Elizabeth observed. "She hasn't any looks to speak of; just a thin, pale, proud-looking girl. Teddie might have had a dozen who were better looking, but he never seemed to trouble about girls. She must be clever."

"Other people can be clever, too," Aunt Sarah remarked.

"It's easy enough to be clever," said Aunt Elizabeth, "when you don't care for people. It's different when you do. And Teddie is cleverer than you would ever allow, Sarah. If we threaten to disinherit him, he'll only laugh at us. I remember when he was a wee little chap"—she wiped her eyes furiously—"before we cut off his pretty curls—how Jane cried!"

"So did you!" Aunt Jane asserted. "I dare say Sarah did, too, if we'd known. I never saw such curls."

"Golden!" said Aunt Sarah.

She turned her head away, and her sisters sniffed audibly. Each of the three kept a little golden curl among her precious relics.

"He used to say," Aunt Elizabeth continued, "When you say I s'an't, I know I s'all! We never denied him anything; and he has been a good lad, a very good lad. We have never had the trouble with him that some people have with their children. I'm not going to quarrel with the boy and make him hate me."

"I do not intend to quarrel with the boy," Aunt Sarah asserted.

"But if we have any unpleasantness with *her*—" Aunt Jane began.

"We shall not have any unpleasantness, Jane."

"What do you mean to do, Sarah?"

"I mean that we shall give her to understand that there will be nothing for Teddie if he marries her; and she will release him from his engagement."

"But when he finds out that we have done it?"

"I shall say: 'My boy, would you have wished her to marry you not loving you? Think over it before you judge those who do love you, and who have acted with no other thought than your interest. As for our money, Teddie, it is yours, whatever you do, even if you break our hearts.' Teddie is only thoughtless on the surface. He is a sensible, reasonable fellow at heart, and grateful. He was always a grateful little chap. Her action will be our justification. If I knew he would hate me for doing things for his good, I would do them. So would you."

"Yes," said Aunt Elizabeth. "Yes."

"You are right, as usual, Sarah," Aunt Jane confessed.

"Besides," said Aunt Sarah, "she will not tell him why she has broken it off. She has doubtless a sense of shame."

"She will not tell him that she is breaking it off because we threaten to disinherit him," said Aunt Elizabeth.

"But she will probably say that the attitude of his family toward her renders the marriage impossible."

"When Teddie brings her to-morrow," Aunt Sarah retorted, "he will see that there is no cause for complaint in that respect. Our attitude will be pleasant; particularly pleasant, he will think. We can make her understand without letting him notice anything. Women are clever than men."

"Yes," said Aunt Jane. "That is the danger. She may be a little too clever for us, Sarah. If she could make him fall in love with her, considering how little he noticed women—and it isn't as if she were specially pretty—she is clever enough for anything. You may think she'll take in whatever we say. I think she will talk to Teddie about it, and find out that we are not likely to carry out the threat, and snap her fingers at us."

"I think so, too," Aunt Elizabeth agreed.

"Then," said Aunt Sarah, "we will alter the plan. Instead of saying that we will not leave him our money, we will give her to understand that we have nothing—next to nothing—to leave. Then this—this 'woman on a pedestal' will jump down. We must be pleasant to her to-morrow, remember."

"Quite pleasant," said Aunt Elizabeth.

"Very pleasant," echoed Aunt Jane.

The voices of the old ladies were unpleasantly grim, and they set their old faces sternly.

Teddie brought his fiancée the next afternoon; a pale slip of a girl, with a very calm face and very large, still eyes; a statue lacking a marble pedestal.

"This is Lady Alice," he announced. "Alice, I mean. I've told her all about you, and what you've done for me. You've only got to like one another, and that's easy."

He smiled at the easiness of it. It had always been easy to him to like people. Perhaps that was why people found it easy to like him.

"Doubtless," said Aunt Sarah, "it is easy to like Lady Alice; but I do not know that we are so easy to like. We are rather blunt people, Lady Alice, with a habit of speaking the truth."

Lady Alice bowed, watching with her big eyes, as if waiting for truth to be told. She was under no misapprehension as to the feeling of Teddie's aunts toward her, they saw. She was very silent during the call, and looked straight before her. Her voice was pleasant when she spoke, and she always said the right thing; but she did not smile till the end of the visit, when Aunt Sarah asked her to come to see them again soon. She smiled faintly then.

"I will come," she promised.

Her big eyes seemed to dare Aunt Sarah's for just the tenth of a second. Aunt Sarah noted that look.

"She is clever," she observed, when she had gone.

"To me," objected Aunt Elizabeth, "she seems a tongue-tied fool!"

"It doesn't matter," said Aunt Jane, with a sound almost like a sob, "whether she is clever or foolish. She does not care for our Teddie, only his money; *our* money. I know the way a girl looks at the man she loves."

Who should know if Aunt Jane did not? Aunt Jane, who had been the beauty of her time, and who had refused twenty offers, it was said, because one man had died.

"It matters in this way," Aunt Sarah told them: "She is clever enough to take a hint. There will be no scene, and no unpleasantness afterward. I shall just speak of our losses and the struggle that Teddie will have; and the advantage to him of a wife who has not been used to wealth. I will have that slap at my lady on the pedestal. She will not make a sign, you'll find, to us. She'll just sit and stare and say, 'Yes,' and 'No,' and 'Is that so?' There won't be a word about Teddie's fortune, or her disappointment, or about breaking off the engagement. She'll just give a little shrug, and smile scornfully over her shoulder as she goes. The next day she'll write to Teddie, and go away, probably. As Jane says, she doesn't care for him; or for anybody but herself, I should say. It will be easy enough to manage it when we get a chance to talk to her alone."

The chance came the very next day. Lady Alice called in the afternoon when Teddie was out.

After the preliminary courtesies, she sat bolt upright and stared at them with her big eyes.

"So you have come to see us quickly," Aunt Sarah said; and Lady Alice smiled her very faint smile.

"I have come to be told truths to," she said.

She glanced at Aunt Elizabeth and at Aunt Jane, but her eyes stayed upon Aunt Sarah. They looked at each other for a long while; a steady-faced old woman, and a steady-faced girl.

"You are courageous," Aunt Sarah said at length, with a kind of grudging respect.

"We have always been that," the girl answered. "Our men were always soldiers; and, if need be, the women. Yes. I thought you wanted to say blunt truths to me. So I came."

"There are ways of telling the truth," said Aunt Sarah, "and ways. You see, Teddie was left with us when he was a very little boy. His father was drowned, and the shock killed his mother. So, of course, we brought him here. He was only a few months old then. It was rather trying at first to have a little baby to look after, but he was very good, and—we did our best. I remember how we bought books about bringing up children, and studied them at nights, and— Well, we have all been mothers to him—three mothers. It is unnecessary to tell you all this, perhaps, but—"

"I understand," the girl said.

"I wonder." Aunt Sarah spoke half to herself.

"You want me to see that your nephew matters very much to you," said Lady Alice, "and I matter very little. That truth is obvious, and natural. I do not complain. Yes?"

"He matters very much to us," Aunt Sarah said. "We are women who have missed many things in life, Lady Alice. The love of a little child, now grown to a man, has been our all in all. Before God"—she raised her hands suddenly—"any one of us three would lie down

and die for him as a mother would. We— There are things that one cannot talk about. This emotion is somewhat unnecessary. Pardon me."

Lady Alice bowed.

"I understand," she acknowledged.

"When we heard that you and he were engaged, we were, of course, surprised," Aunt Sarah went on.

"Why?" the girl asked calmly.

"Because—I must come to the blunt truth, Lady Alice—we did not think that you would marry a man who was—whom you would consider to be—out of your sphere; and who at the same time was—poor."

Three pairs of eyes fixed on the girl's face at the word; and three women admired its steadiness. There was no sign that the blow had gone home.

"Afterward," Aunt Sarah continued, "we wondered whether—Teddie is very—very optimistic. So long as he has sufficient for the day, he does not trouble very much about the future. We fancied that he hardly realized the great losses which we have suffered of late years, and the very little that we have to leave him. He would not intentionally deceive you upon the point, of course—"

"I think," Lady Alice agreed, "he would not intentionally deceive me. I gather that he has been brought up by those who respect the truth. He would not deceive me—any more than *you* would."

It was fortunate for the success of the scheme, Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Jane thought, that Lady Alice did not look at them. They were very conscious that their faces had reddened. Aunt Sarah was made of sterner stuff, and she did not flinch when the steel went home.

"We have brought him up with entire devotion to his good," she said steadily. "I hope that your devotion to him will be able to take the place of ours, when— We are not young, Lady Alice. You and he will have a struggle, of course, but—it is fortunate that you have been used to—that you have not been very rich, I understand."

"You understand rightly," the girl

stated calmly. "I have been poor. I hate being poor."

"I understand," said Aunt Sarah.

"I wonder," said the girl.

"Of course—" Aunt Sarah paused for a moment. "Of course, if there was any misapprehension, Teddie would not take advantage of it. He is not that kind."

"No," said Lady Alice. "He is not that kind."

There was a long silence.

"Well," said Aunt Sarah, "that is what was in my mind to tell you. I do not know if—if you will pardon an old woman who—who loves him like a son. I want to say something more than I intended."

"Yes," Lady Alice nodded quietly. "Yes, please?"

"Will you try to—to hurt him as little as possible in breaking off the engagement? You see, he—he puts you on a pedestal. That is how he spoke of you to us. 'A lady on a pedestal.'"

Lady Alice's pale face lit suddenly. It struck the three old ladies that, after all, she *was* beautiful.

"Please God," she said, "he shall keep me there."

Aunt Jane gave a sudden cry and put her hands on the girl's.

"You mean that—that you will marry him all the same?" she asked.

The girl took the old hands in her young hands.

"Yes, dear," she said.

"I beg your pardon," said Aunt Sarah. "I misjudged you, and—I have deceived you about our money. We—"

"No," said Lady Alice, "you did not deceive me. I understood. I will not deceive you. If I had thought when I first met him that he was poor, I should have tried not to love him. I suppose I should have run away." She laughed faintly. "Now I couldn't! If he is poor, I will be poor with him. If he is in trouble, I will be in trouble, too. I think it is foolish to love any one like that, but I do. If you will let me, I will love you, too!"

"Oh, my dear!" cried Aunt Sarah. "Oh, my dear!"

"It is so easy to love you," said Aunt Elizabeth.

Aunt Jane kissed her twice.

"We have had a visitor," Aunt Sarah told Teddie when he came in. "A very dear visitor. Your pretty lady on the pedestal. You are quite right to put her there."



DRIFTWOOD

OUT of the dark, out of the night,
Through the breaking wave, and the salt sea foam,
Across the bar by the harbor light,
A battered ship drives home.

Out of the dead years lost to sight,
Out of the dusk and the silver dew,
Out of the wind, out of the night,
An olden dream comes true.

CHARLES W. KENNEDY.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS

B A FIRST NIGHTER

Short crop in appealing entertainments makes many early closings in the theaters. Mr. Augustus Thomas' new play, "As a Man Thinks," a fine and thoughtful drama. The acting of Mr. Mason, Miss Herne, and others. "Thais," as drama, provides a lavish spectacle in which Miss Constance Collier scores a deserved success. Mrs. Fiske, in lighter vein, acts amusingly in "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh," first work of a new playwright. Varied bill of vaudeville and musical comedy at the Winter Garden. "The Pink Lady," an assured hit, is an exceptionally attractive entertainment

A YEAR ago theatrical managers were predicting that the time would soon come when there would be no such thing as a summer hiatus in amusements. That they believed in the prophecy was shown by the fact that never before in the history of the New York stage were there so many theaters opened or so many plays produced in the month of August. The idea appeared to be that the public wanted its amusement whether the weather was hot or cool, and the managers were convinced that it would be to their profit to supply it. In this respect as in most others they were proceeding along the line of simian instinct which so often governs their actions.

The fact of the matter was this: Two or three theaters had stayed open through a preceding summer, and, conditions happening to be particularly favorable and the entertainments particularly good, their business was exceptional. As a result, every other manager felt that he might be enjoying the same advantages. But when ten theaters were open instead of three, the business was merely divided up between them, and few of them made money.

It is not likely that the same mistake will be made again this year. Indeed, at the present moment considerable difficulty is being had in securing attractions sufficiently in demand to keep many of the houses open until the first warm days. And before the end of April a number of theaters, which ordinarily harbor attractions until well into the summer, had already closed their doors.

There is only one reasonable explanation. There have been too many mediocre plays, and there are too many theaters. As a result, many have had to suffer. The public will always continue to patronize the good entertainments and scrupulously avoid those which are merely serving as stop-gaps to keep the theaters open. Of the latter there have been more during the present season than in any similar period of time.

An example, however, of the kind of play which may be counted on to do business whenever and wherever it is produced is Mr. Augustus Thomas' "As a Man Thinks," seen at the Thirty-ninth Street Theater. It is in many respects a remarkable play, and this, too, in spite of the fact that one of its principal com-

plications, the compromising of a young wife by her visit to a lover's rooms, belongs to the oldest things in modern drama. But it is so beautifully written, with so much underlying thought, such exquisite literary elaboration, and such expressive, forceful, and moving dramatic power, that it has properly taken its place as one of the two most successful dramas of the year.

Mr. Charles Klein, in "The Gamblers," has provided the other piece which hit the public's more serious fancy. But Mr. Klein writes more in the raw than Mr. Thomas, and gets his effects through something of sheer power and force, whereas Mr. Thomas, in a measure, seeks to insure attention by a display of philosophical and psychological processes dramatically considered. Both men are alike in the fact that they set some store on the effect of mind over matter—to use the trite phrasing of it. But in Mr. Klein's plays these things are always rather objectively presented. With Mr. Thomas they have occasionally appeared somewhat theoretical even in the plays.

In "As a Man Thinks," however, he discusses very beautifully and very affectingly the subject of what the mental scientists might call malicious animal magnetism. He holds that a man's thoughts bear not only upon the subject against whom they are directed, but upon the thinker himself.

In a sense we get here a reverse of the older theory that a sound body makes a sound mind. *Doctor Seelig*, the philosophical old physician of the play, argues that a man may be ill of his own evil thoughts of others. And it must be confessed that there is something in the theory. One may more readily take issue with Mr. Thomas' assumption that his play was a discussion of some Jewish question or other, as evidenced in the fact that it first bore the title "The Jew." The dominant figure in the action, to be sure, is the Jew, *Doctor Samuel Seelig*, and it is a most appealing figure and one representing the highest humanitarianism. But its philosophy is no more applicable to the Jew than to any other man who has

learned the value of the golden rule, and tries to apply it in his practice.

This Jew, *Doctor Seelig*, because of his professional connections with the family of *Mr. and Mrs. Clayton*, becomes the mediator in their domestic difficulties. The *Claytons* have been married about nine years, and have a young son. It develops soon that *Clayton* has led an irregular life in Paris, and his wife has discovered it. She has forgiven him once, but a slip made in conversation by *Benjamin De Lota*, a Jew and an art critic on *Clayton's* magazine, reveals to the wife that her husband's offense has been graver than she first supposed.

De Lota is engaged to *Doctor Seelig's* daughter, who regards him only half-heartedly, and is strongly attracted to *Julian Burrill*, a Gentile, and a successful sculptor. The father, not knowing of *De Lota's* connection with *Clayton's* immoralities, favors him over *Burrill* as a future son-in-law because he believes, despite his liberal views, that Jews should marry their own people.

Mrs. Clayton, driven to desperation, allows herself to be compromised by *De Lota*, with whom she had been in love many years before, and the discovery of her act leads her husband to threaten divorce. It is here that the philosophical physician hurls his influence against the couple's domestic troubles. He does not deny an unequal moral responsibility of the sexes, but in a scene remarkable for its insight into life he expounds his views, based on the text that "on the standard of woman's virtue rests the welfare of the world."

In another argument directed toward the husband, he insists that every plaintiff should come to the bar of justice with clean hands. *Clayton*, distracted by the domestic grief and hatred of the man who has wrecked his home, is now ill. *Doctor Seelig* undertakes his case, and sets out to cure him by demonstrating the value of forgiveness, of compassion, and of love as a panacea for physical ills. The psychology of the situation is closely analyzed, and under the guidance of the doctor's wisdom the couple are reconciled. But in the last

moment *Doctor Seelig* is called upon to put to the test all his philosophy and ability to forgive on account of the elopement of his daughter with her Gentle sweetheart.

It is generally known that Mr. Thomas is his own stage manager, and that his position enables him to exercise his own judgment in the selection of his casts. These facts, no doubt, have something to do with the excellent ensemble in this play. The most impressive opportunities come to Mr. John Mason, of course, and as *Doctor Seelig* he plays with every suggestion of the needed mental superiority and dominating optimism. Miss Chrystal Herne, an actress who has developed beautiful powers, is lovely, appealing, and tender as *Mrs. Clayton*. Another interesting figure is provided by the splendid artiste, Miss Amelia Gardner, while Vincent Serrano, John Flood, Walter Hale, Charlotte Ives, and William Sampson fill out a cast that is admirably satisfying in almost every respect.

"*Thaïs*," as a novel, has been translated into many languages since it was written by Anatole France in 1889. Five years later it was used as the basis for an opera composed by Jules Massenet, and this present year finds the story again bidding for popularity in the form of a drama written by Paul Wistach. In each of its forms the story centers around three characters. In the operatic world, Sibyl Sanderson, who originated the rôle, Carmen-Melis, Cavalieri, and Georgette Le Blanc have established themselves in Europe, while Mary Garden and Lillian Grenville have been brilliantly successful as "*Thaïs*" in America. Miss Garden is practically acknowledged to possess claims on the part—so successful has she been with "*Thaïs*."

Miss Constance Collier, an English actress of wide experience, was chosen as the dramatic *Thaïs*. And she has justified the confidence of the producers of the play. Maurice Renaud has been wonderfully successful as *Athanael*, the holy hermit, a rôle, which in the drama is called *Daniel*, and is well played by Tyrone Power.

The dramatic "*Thaïs*," produced at the Criterion, is a rich, pictorial presentation of the story of a "Sinner who is saved by a saint and a saint who is saved by a sinner," spectacularly as fine as anything our stage has held in recent years, and on the whole rather a moving thing. Mr. Wistach's part of the work has been done with taste, feeling, and discretion, and the principals are competent enough to provide the needed histrionic uplift.

Miss Constance Collier especially commands herself by an embodiment of *Thaïs*, which is not only sumptuous in its physical reflection of the Anatole France heroine, but has the further advantages of an exceptional skill in elocution and a remarkable degree of plasticity in graceful pose. On a stage where good reading is only too rare, Miss Collier's varied delivery of the lines is in itself a commendation to appreciation. But she has besides the temperament and fire to command and fix attention. Mr. Tyrone Power is the hermit with his familiar show of vocal richness, and the *Nicias* is pictorially embodied in Arthur Forrest.

It is possible that the public which regards Mrs. Fiske as its high priestess of a more or less intellectual kind of entertainment may be disappointed in "*Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh*," a clever little farce by a new author, Mr. Harry James Smith, which was produced at the Lyceum after a revival of the actress' more familiar "*Becky Sharp*." However, for those playgoers who are willing to laugh, and are not too fastidious as to the intellectual exercise involved, this play is likely to prove fairly popular.

In it, once more, Mrs. Fiske is a deceiving woman, a climber in the social world, whose success in life is the result, first of her own shrewdness, then of the susceptibility and weakness of others. *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh* is prepared to take advantage of the family of so-called aristocrats with whom she happens to come into relations; but, on the other hand, her opportunity is largely a result of that family's snobbish regard for blood, names, and position.

Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh is the daughter of a prosperous American quack, the dead and gone *Jim Sails*, known more generally as "the sufferer's friend." Having changed her name—and those of her mother and sister—to *De Salle*, and set up a claim to illustrious French origin, she has contrived to captivate and marry an English parson of aristocratic family. Thereupon she schemes to make a good match for her sister *Violet*, and presently contrives to engage her to *Anthony*, the son and heir of the rich *Rawson* family of Long Island. They receive *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh*, her sister, and her vulgar old mother with the reverence which they deem due to scions of the choicest British ancestry, and are much distressed because *Geoffrey Rawson*, the younger son and ne'er-do-well of the family, does not seem to be properly impressed. The fact is that he has fallen in love with *Violet*, and is honorably doing his best to keep out of his brother's way. All goes well until one *Peter Swallow*, an undertaker and "monument builder" from Indiana, turns up. He was the affianced husband of *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh* in the old days, was jilted by her, and is now anxious to show her up.

Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh—warned by a friendly housemaid—is able to bluff *Swallow* out of his belief in her identity, and is triumphing, when her sister, who has been growing more and more rebellious against the dishonest traffic of which she has been the victim, blurts out the whole truth. Thereupon the indignant *Rawson* orders the impostors out of the house.

This is the most amusing scene in the play, and in it Mrs. Fiske employs her skill to admirable advantage. Of course, *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh* has to win out, and this she is enabled to do by the providential discovery of the double life led by the elder son, *Anthony*. By threatening to publish the affair in the local press, she brings her hosts to terms. She compels them to agree to the marriage of *Geoffrey* and *Violet*, and to beg her humbly to extend her visit.

Mrs. Fiske's transitions from the

stilted and affected speech and mannerisms of the fictitious English lady to the broad vernacular of the Indiana parvenu, and the accompanying action suitable to both, provide the main essentials of a most amusing characterization, and she has good support, especially in the person of Miss Kathlene MacDonell, as the virtuous young sister. Mr. Henry E. Dixey hardly realizes the full possibilities of the rôle of the comic Indiana monument builder, a rôle, by the way, somewhat overwritten as the play was first seen.

Comes then the opening of the "Winter Garden," described as a home for the Continental idea of amusements, and a very commodious and well-appointed music hall on the site of the old horse exchange at Broadway and Fifth Street, where prancing human ponies, neat and trim of limb, now substitute for the former four-footed tribe. For its opening entertainment an elaborate program of opera, musical comedy, vaudeville, and ballet was prepared—so elaborate, in fact, that it kept the first-night audience until after twelve-thirty o'clock. The show has since been cut down at a considerable advantage.

The exterior of the Opéra in Paris, the interior of a fashionable modiste's establishment, the students' ball, with its cohorts of white-legged marchers, the duel between two women rivals for an artist's love in the Bois de Boulogne, and finally the ballet at the Folies Marigny are some of the scenes in "*La Belle Paree*," its chief feature. Melville Ellis, in designing the numerous and varied dresses, has accomplished some fascinating results. Particularly lovely is a dance in the milliner's shop, in which against a ground of rose-colored draperies gigantic hat boxes striped in black and white and tied with colored ribbons are made the means of the maneuvers of the chorus.

In "*La Belle Paree*," the wave of womanly loveliness is at its height. Kitty Gordon is a society dressmaker in the piece, revealing the wonderful suffragette trousers she had invented and the hats of her own design studied

to suit the psychology of her patrons. Mizzi Hajos is a virtuoso with the baton, and leads an Amazon march with spirit. And a great hit is scored by those diminutive performers, Tempest and Sunshine, who appear in various guises. Stella Mayhew is irresistibly droll as a negro maid enjoying the delights of Paris life. Equally amusing is Al Jolson, who possesses genuine negro unction in his speech and manner.

Finally, of the entertainments which may be counted to last well into the summer is "The Pink Lady" at the New Amsterdam, truly a most delightful musical comedy, with both comedy and music to commend it. In its original French-farce form as "The Satyr," it enjoyed a vogue in Paris, but it may well be doubted whether its popularity was so great as it will be now, with a very good book by C. M. C. McLellan and some very ingratiating tunes by Mr. Ivan Caryll.

Commencing gayly with a scene in the woods at Compiegne with a real blond beauty posed on the steps of a restaurant, the action passes to a furniture shop in the Rue St. Honoré. In the third act a pictorial opening is afforded by a Ball of the Nymphs and Satyrs. Mr. Caryll has written music which has a breezy swing, and Mr. McLellan has provided them all with very clever lyrics.

Perhaps the most popular number in the piece, speaking for those who whistle, will be "The Girl by the Saskatchewan," which has really a "haunting" refrain. "Beautiful Lady" in the last act has a waltz, played by a violinist on the stage, a Paris café violinist in type, which also may prove worthy of attention from these sources, and an ensemble number, "Donny Did, Donny Didn't," is most ingénious and amusing.

In "The Kiss Waltz" in the second act, in which *Claudine* teaches *Doudidier* how to kiss, the action is so capital that it wouldn't matter if there were no music at all.

William Elliott, who last season had *Madame X* weeping over him at every performance, and now making his début in this form of entertainment, has a light-comedy touch which fits excellently into the scheme of things. Miss Hege-mann has never been funnier than she is in the rôle of *Madame Doudidier*, and Frank Lalor, as *Doudidier*, quite excels any previous effort of his own at laugh-providing.

Miss Hazel Dawn, a newcomer, is a very good choice for *Claudine*, the pink lady, and, after she has sung and danced and done all other things, she is called upon to play the violin. Miss Alice Dovey is very nice indeed, and Alma Francis, as a blond beauty, and Ida M. Adams both merit a kind word.



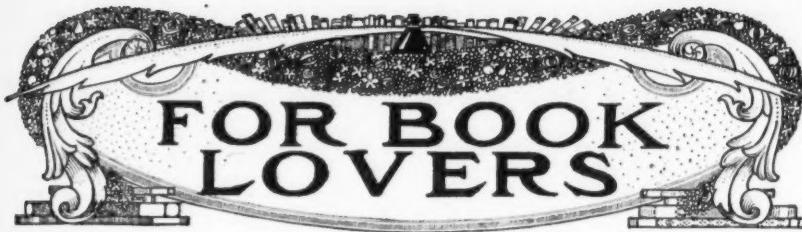
THE POET

HE dipped his pen in golden light,
And wrote what lay within his heart,
His eyes averted from the night,
And never stopped to think of art.

He missed the laurel of renown.
He failed to win the highest goal.
Yet on his brow he wears the crown
That comes to him who saves a soul.

For one all heedless of his form
Sunk in the depths of grim despair
Found in his lines a message warm
That led to Peace from realms of Care.

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.



FOR BOOK LOVERS

IN "The New Machiavelli," published by Duffield & Co., H. G. Wells has added enormously to the strength of his claim to be considered one of the great writers of English fiction.

The book has been called a treatise by some critics, most mistakenly we think; it is, in our opinion, a human document of tremendous significance. It is an exposition of the intimate intellectual, moral, and spiritual life of Richard Remington, from the period of the dawning of consciousness up to the time when he had won a commanding position in British politics and his future, illimitable as it seemed, was ruined by the only genuine emotional experience in his whole career.

It is not altogether unusual for a novelist to write his story in the form of "confessions," nor is it a particularly difficult undertaking to carry out so as to be readable and successful. But it is an absolutely unique achievement to do what Mr. Wells has done in "The New Machiavelli." Its prevailing characteristic is an air of absolute candor; one feels that if Remington has omitted anything in the telling of his story, it is because he is not quite certain of his recollection of things or his entire understanding of his motives; the reader is convinced that the writer has no reservations about himself.

Throughout most of the book, Mr. Wells' logic and analysis are merciless and infallible, and the narrative is built up bit by bit until finally a structure appears almost perfect in proportion and detail.

It is a narrative which includes a marvelously exact view of contempo-

rary English life, and this, together with the self-revelation of the hero, is what makes the book really great.

But there is one great defect, which fortunately is postponed so long that its effect on the whole is minimized. Remington's catastrophe is brought upon him by his love for another woman. Granted that Parnell's example is sufficient proof that public life is ended for a man who offends Mrs. Grundy, yet neither Remington nor Isabel seems to be the sort of person to accept so meekly the utter oblivion into which they are plunged.



"Joyce of the North Woods," by Harriet T. Comstock, just published by Doubleday, Page & Co., is one of those books, rare enough in these days, which one can read and lay aside with a feeling of complete satisfaction. It has a freshness and vitality that convince the reader not only of the author's sincerity, but of the encouraging fact that the art of story-telling is one that cannot be limited by the rules of formalists, pedants, and imitators.

Mrs. Comstock has succeeded, first of all, in giving a realistic picture of the logging community of St. Angé in the North Woods as the background and setting of her drama, so that a reader of even moderate imagination can see the straggling village in its environment of woods and hills.

The story is Joyce Birkdale's story; it is the history of a woman's conflict, or rather the conflict that took place within her between the sordid, deadening, brutalizing influences of the envir-

onment in which she had lived and her native aspirations, quickened by contact with humanizing impulses coming from "beyond the tall trees."

On the one hand the circumstances of her life, represented by the village boss, Leon Tate, the keeper of the Black Cat, forced her into the debasing marriage with Jude Lanzoon, while on the other the refining presence of Gaston and Drew, the "lunger" preacher, set her in revolt against her situation, a revolt which was only subdued by her love for Gaston and the feminine sympathy of Ruth Dale.

It is a story largely of primitive passions; the sort that inevitably produces situations dramatic to the verge of tragedy. It might be somber were it not for the variety of skillful and appreciative characterization and the element of comedy in the persons of Jack Filmer, Constance Drew, and the quaint views of Isa Tate.

It only remains to say that the story is American to the core, and it is intensely interesting.



Jacques Futrelle has turned his attention to politics to the advantage, it seems to us, of novel readers of all sorts, for his new book, "The High Hand," published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, is one of the liveliest tales we have read in some time.

If anybody really believes there is nothing new under the sun, he need only supply himself with a copy of this book to be convinced that he is mistaken. One would have supposed that the newspapers had exhausted the subject of grafting and bribery among public servants, and that the reformers, organized and otherwise, had proposed and made effective all practical remedies. But it is not so, or at least it had not been up to the time Mr. Futrelle published "The High Hand."

Jim Warren was a novice in politics. It was a subject he knew nothing about, for he had been too busy working his way up to the position of superintendent of the plow works at Warburton. Politics as a career had never had even the substance of a dream for him until one day Bob Allair, "a grizzled veteran of the foundry," casually asked: "Why don't you go into politics, super?"

The question pricked his curiosity, and he began to look into the subject. His investigation drew his attention to Francis Everard Lewis, the boss of the legislature, and it was not long before he reached a conclusion, and with it came his big idea. He said to himself: "Obviously this game is played with

Some of the short stories of Montague Glass have been collected and published in a single volume by Doubleday, Page & Co. under the title, "Potash and Perlmutter."

The stories in this book are evidence of Mr. Glass' peculiar gift—or it may be the result of special study of the Hebrew and Yiddish types. He has drawn with remarkable clarity and vigor the characters of the two partners, Abe Potash and Morris Perlmutter, has shown a sufficiently thorough understanding of the cloak and suit business, and a keen perception of the bond that unites all members of the Jewish race, even in the midst of the fierce competition of business.

The tales have their own special spice of humor which grows out of the curious mixture of shrewdness and naïveté in the two partners, and their apparently unconscious acceptance of the absolute unity of their interests. They are keen business men, thoroughly

familiar with all the details of the trade, including the intimate affairs of their competitors, but at the same time, in their relations with each other and with their respective families, they are as guileless as children.

The significant fact underlying these tales is the fundamental unity of the Jewish race. Mr. Glass has not only grasped that fact, but he has so used it as to make it the source of the vitality with which the stories abound. Therefore, they are much more than merely entertaining.



marked cards. I think I'll mark me a pack and sit in."

He began by securing an election to the legislature and renting a box with a safe-deposit company. Then he pursued his plan undeviatingly and mercilessly, and, before the end of the session, he routed the grafters, threw his State into convulsions, made certain his nomination for governor, and won a bride. And it was all really as simple as could be. Any one can do what Jim Warren accomplished. But, like all simple things, nobody has ever thought of it.



E. W. Hornung's new book, "The Camera Fiend," published by Charles Scribner's Sons, is not what readers of the Raffles stories would be likely to expect. It is a rather fantastic tale, but without the action and dramatic suspense that are needed to sustain the burden of its essential improbability and concentrate the interest of the reader.

It is, perhaps, not so strange that an eccentric German like Doctor Baumgartner should be obsessed with the idea of photographing the human soul as it departs from the body, and that he should have made a nuisance of himself at the London hospitals by his requests to be allowed to keep a vigil, with his camera, at the bedside of dying paupers; very likely the authorities of any hospital could tell of incidents as uncanny as this. But that he should, in default of such opportunities, make them for himself, by wandering about the city and committing murders to gratify his crazy curiosity, is altogether too weird—for fiction, at any rate.

On one of his early morning homicidal excursions in Hyde Park, he kills a sleeping tramp, and is surprised, or thinks he is, by a youthful somnambulist, Pocket Upton. It isn't necessary to tell how the boy happened to be sleeping in the park with a pistol in his possession; the reader can find that out for himself. It is enough to say that the doctor attempts to extricate himself from the predicament by hiding the boy in his house, and succeeds only in making matters worse for himself, when young Upton's father, alarmed by his son's disappearance, employs a Sherlock Holmes named Thrush to find him.



Important New Books.

"Adventure," Jack London, Macmillan Co.
"Demeter's Daughter," Eden Phillpotts, John Lane Co.

"The Golden Silence," C. N. & A. M. Williamson, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Brazenhead the Great," Maurice Hewlett, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Wandering Ghosts," F. Marion Crawford, Macmillan Co.

"The Visionary," Susan Glaspell, Frederick A. Stokes Co.

"The Wastrel," Arthur D. Howden Smith, Duffield & Co.

"Her Little Young Ladyship," Clara E. Laughlin, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Mary," Winifred Graham, Mitchell Kennerley.

"The Grain of Dust," David Graham Phillips, D. Appleton & Co.

"Brother Copas," A. T. Quiller Couch, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Lady Unknown," Justus Miles Forman, Harper & Bros.

"The Panther's Cub," Agnes and Egerton Castle, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Denry the Audacious," Arnold Bennett, E. P. Dutton & Co.



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

MARGARETTA TUTTLE has written a novel. It is called "By the Gate of Allah," and will appear, complete, in the next issue of this magazine. We believe that this novel is the finest piece of work that this writer has yet given us. Those of you who have been following Margareta Tuttle's series of short stories in AINSLEE'S will appreciate the significance of this statement.

A brilliant woman of great wealth, in love with, and loved by, a conventional, high-minded clergyman; an ever-menacing lunatic husband escaped from his asylum; and a plot that grows and gathers power as it moves along, faster and faster, like some gigantic snowball rolling downhill—these in the hands of most authors would result in crude melodrama. But the woman is Nadine Carson, the clergyman is the Reverend Wrexford Thorne, and in the hands of Margareta Tuttle their story becomes literature.

BUT one brilliant story does not make a good magazine. On the contrary, it only makes it the more difficult to make a magazine that shall seem good. It accentuates the weak spots. With this in mind we have done our utmost to get together a number which as a whole will bear comparison with any of its parts. Let us see how we have succeeded.

In the first place we have a Herman Whitaker story, one of his very strongest. Of "The Garden of Eden" we have no doubts. Mr. Whitaker's Eden is in Mexico; his Adam is an Englishman whose practicability is tempered by an idyllic temperament that has been abnormally developed by an early training in "High Church" symbolism, while Eve is a golden-brown Tehuana girl—Eve is adorable.

Then there are "Her Chance," a dramatic tale of the Northwest, by William Slavens McNutt; "The Snow-blind Man," a gripping story, by George Hyde Preston; "The Man Who Could Not Love," by Anna Steese

Richardson, and "The Bone and the Flesh of King Davie," by Grace Miller White. These five stories give evidence that "strength" and "entertainment" in fiction are by no means conflicting qualities.

OF an entirely different type is Norval Richardson's "Pilarcita." A young man is invited by the girl he loves, an American, to visit her in Cuba. On the voyage down he meets a mysterious, dark-eyed Spanish beauty. Later, in Cuba, he receives a call for help from her; she has fallen into the hands of bandits. To tell more would be unfair to Mr. Richardson. We were so carried along by this delightful romance that when we first read it we were under the impression that it was a very short "short story." As a matter of fact, in length it is almost a novelette.

OF a magazine that aims to entertain no side is more important than its humor. And humor, in order to be humor in July, must be exceptionally good humor. Ellis Parker Butler has written a truly laughable account of "The Housekeeper" who tyrannized two bashful Englishmen on their own Long Island "chicken ranch." There is "Dropping Anchor," in which Frank Condon relates the amusing romance of Rosamond and Wallace, "real bohemians," and makes you understand in his imitable way just why "they have ceased paying nineteen dollars for two dollars' worth of food."

"Fanny Heaslip Lea's stories," as one correspondent aptly puts it, "are written champagne." "Who Laughs Last" well merits this description. "Miranda," by Georgia Wood Pangborn, and "Give or Take," by Edna Kingsley Wallace, are alike only in this: Both are love stories, and each possesses a delicate charm of its own.

Humor's twin, pathos, makes its appeal in

"The Dog at His Gate," by David King. Here is a story for those who love dogs, those who love children, or for those who don't but should.



CHURCHILL WILLIAMS, in "The Crocodile Bracelet," gives us a detective story that is as delightful as most detective stories are commonplace. Elliott Flower has another of his breezy Alphabet Applegate stories, Jane W. Guthrie continues her entertaining bridge whist series, and Johnson Morton spins a sprightly yarn around "The Man Who Stole Berenice." In all the July AINSLEE'S will offer sixteen short stories.



ONE story in the July number of which we have been trying to tell you for some time is "By the Sign That Conquered," by Nalbro Bartley, an author new to AINSLEE'S. We started to mention it at the beginning of this talk, but concluded that it belonged among the humorous stories rather than among the "strong" ones. Then, when we began to talk about humor, the pathos and love interest of it began to stand out, and when we came to pathos— Well, the only thing we are really certain of about this little story is that we found it mighty entertaining.



WHEN we pause to think of what we've been saying to you we wonder if we haven't made this "talk" sound a little like a press agent's announcement; whether we haven't let our enthusiasm run away with our discrimination. But as we go back and consider each statement separately we honestly believe that every word of praise is fully justified. This next number is a good number. You may have heard of the man whose wife had just taken off mourning.

"Is your wife entertaining this season?" a friend asked.

"Not very," admitted the man, with a slight yawn.

Well, AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE is entertaining this season.



THIS matter of being entertaining brings us to a friendly letter we received the other day from a well-known humorist.

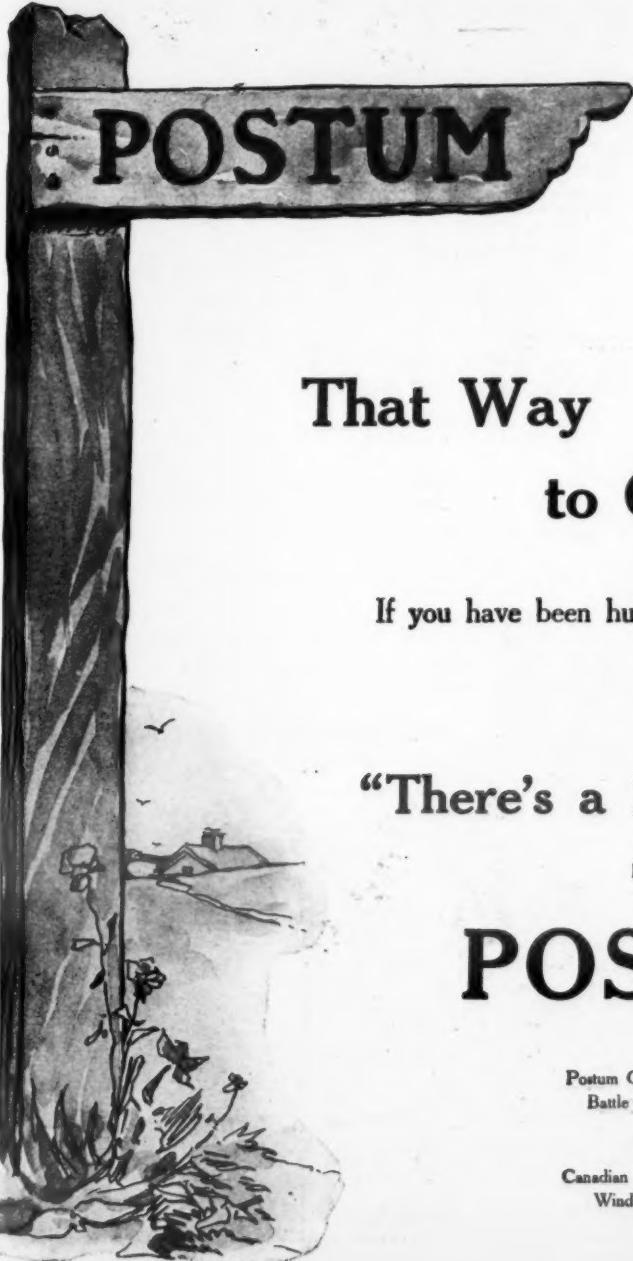
"Everybody admits that AINSLEE'S is the most entertaining magazine on the market," our friend writes, "but certain highbrows connected with some of your 'uplift' contemporaries rather sneeringly insinuate that you have no noble mission in life. As a matter of fact, with the cost of living higher than it ever has been and still soaring, what nobler mission could any magazine have than to entertain? The 'uplift' magazines can only tell us *why* the cost of living is so high; you, by truly entertaining us, can almost make the living worth its cost."

We confess that we have never looked upon Joseph Lincoln, Frank Condon, or Ellis Parker Butler as great "uplifters." We rather like the idea.



FEW people outside of an editor can appreciate the value to a magazine of letters from its readers. If a woman buying slippers finds that the first pair shown her have buckles, whereas she prefers them with bows, she does not get up without explanation, leave the shop, and go elsewhere. She tells the salesman that she prefers bows to buckles. Like as not he has just what she wants in stock. If not, he undoubtedly can get them for her.

But a magazine that does not hear from its readers is less fortunate. The customer enters, is shown certain articles by the editor, and, if not suited, leaves without a word of explanation to search in some other magazine. That is why we attach such importance to the great number of letters we receive from you. When you are "not quite suited"—when we are showing you slippers with buckles and you prefer slippers with bows—you write and tell us so. It is this that enables us to give you what you want.



POSTUM

**That Way
to Comfort**

If you have been hurt on
Coffee Lane.

"There's a Reason"

FOR

POSTUM

Postum Cereal Company, Limited
Battle Creek, Mich., U.S.A.

Canadian Postum Cereal Co., Ltd.
Windsor, Ontario, Canada

A June Suggestion

Nabisco Sugar Wafers play an important part during the month of brides and roses.

NABISCO

Sugar Wafers

served with ices, frozen puddings and beverages, add the final touch of elegance and hospitality to every repast—simple or elaborate.

In ten cent tins

Also in twenty-five cent tins

CHOCOLATE TOKENS—Confections of rare goodness with a coating of creamy chocolate.

**NATIONAL BISCUIT
COMPANY**



Tell your newsdealer: "Deliver this magazine to me each month."

It's Printype!

"What a beautiful typewritten letter—as plain as print—as easy to read as a primer! It must be the new Oliver PRINTYPE! I wish all our correspondents used The Printype Oliver Typewriter!"



—A composite quotation from ten thousand business and professional men on being introduced to Printype

A LI, eyes are watching Printype. Its attraction is irresistible. Its beauty and grace, in a typewritten letter, are alluring, attention-compelling. Although absolutely new to typewriting, its counterpart—Book Type—has been used on all the world's presses since the printing art had its inception. It is the Oliver ideal of perfect typography applied to typewriter uses.

We had brought the machine to its maximum of efficiency. We had added, one by one, a score of great innovations. There remained but one point—that was the type itself.

Then came the inspiration which meant a revolution in typewriter type. We would design and produce a new typewriter type face, conforming to the type used in newspapers, magazines and books.

We did! It's here! It's PRINTYPE!

Printype is not an experiment. It is, in all essentials, the type that meets your eye when you read your morning paper, your magazine or your favorite novel. Now that Printype is an accomplished fact, the thought occurs to thousands, why didn't typewriter manufacturers think of it years ago? The same question was asked when, over ten years ago, we introduced *visible writing*.

A Long Step in Advance

The change from the old-style thin outline letters known as Pica Type, universally used up to now on all standard typewriters, to the new, beautiful, readable Printype, is one of vast significance. It means relief from the harmful effect on eyesight of the "outline" typewriter type. For Printype is as easy to read as a child's primer.

It means less liability of mis-reading, due to blurring of outline letters, whose sameness frequently makes the words run together. Printype letters are shaded just as Book Type is shaded.

It means less danger of costly errors, due to confusing the numerals. No possible chance of mistaking 3 for 8 or 9 for 3—each figure is distinct. It means a degree of typographic beauty never before known in typewriting.

And now, because of its newness, it has the enhanced charm of novelty.

Printype Now Famous

The reception of Printype by the business public has been most enthusiastic. We withheld any formal announcement until the machine had been on the market for over a year. Personal demonstrations were its only advertising. The resulting sales were stupendous. Printype letters soon began to appear among common-place old-style correspondence. Wherever received, these mysterious, distinctive, beautiful letters awakened immediate interest. Business men began asking each other, "What's that new kind of typewriter that writes like real print?" Thus the fame of Printype grows as its beauty and utility dawn on the business world.

Ask for Book, Specimen Letter and Demonstration

We will gladly send you a Printype Book, together with a letter written on The Printype Oliver Typewriter. This letter will be a revelation.

Our great sales organization enables us to make an improvement of this character immediately and simultaneously available to the public. Press the button and see how quickly an Oliver Agent will appear with a "Printyper," ready to tell you all about it and write several Printype letters for you. Address Sales Department

Printype OLIVER Typewriter

The Standard Visible Writer

Printype Aids Eyes

The manifold merits of Printype are a constant source of surprise. Printype is restful to eyesight. It delivers its message in the most easily readable form.

The constant reading of thin outline letter typewriting plays havoc with the eyes. It sends thousands to oculists and opticians.

A comparative test of Printype and ordinary typewriting will win you to the type that reads like print.

We Have Not Raised Our Price

We do not ask a premium for The Printype Oliver Typewriter. We have declared a big dividend in favor of typewriter users by supplying this wonderful type, when desired, on the new model Oliver Typewriter.

Our price is \$100, the same as our regular model with Pica Typewriter Type.

"17-Cents-a-Day" Offer

You can buy the new Printype Oliver Typewriter on the famous "17-Cents-a-Day" Purchase Plan. A small first payment brings the machine. Then save 17 cents a day and pay monthly. You can turn in any make of typewriter on your first payment.

If the penny plan interests you, ask for details.



THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY, 728 Oliver Typewriter Building, CHICAGO

Again a Doubled Demand for

No-Rim-Cut Tires—10% Oversize

Over 600,000 Sold

For you motor car owners who still buy clincher tires, here are some facts to consider:

About two years ago the Goodyear No-Rim-Cut—our patented tire—began to become the sensation. It was the final result of ten years spent in tire making.

Last year our tire sales trebled—jumped to \$8,500,000—because of this tire's popularity.

This year, 64 leading motor car makers made contracts with us for No-Rim-Cut tires. More pneumatic-tired cars at the Shows this year were equipped with Goodyear than with any other make.

Now, about 600,000 No-Rim-Cut tires have been sold—enough to equip 150,000 cars. The result of their use is this:

The demand for these tires is more than twice that of last year—six times that of two years ago.

Our enormous plants, with three shifts of men, are run night and day. Our daily output is 2,200 automobile tires. Yet we have not for weeks been less than \$2,000,000 behind on urgent orders.

Should you not know these tires?

The Reasons

Goodyear No-Rim-Cut tires now cost the same as standard clincher tires. They used to cost one-fifth more.

These tires cannot rim-cut. We have run them flat in a hundred tests—as far as twenty miles. A clincher tire, in a single block, may be ruined beyond repair.

No-Rim-Cut tires do not hook to the rim. There is

no head to "freeze" into the rim flange—nothing to pry out when you want to remove it.

The tires are held on by 126 braided wires which are vulcanized into the tire base. They make the tire base unstretchable, so that nothing can force it off.

We control this braided wire feature. It is the only practical method ever discovered to make an unstretchable tire base.

No-Rim-Cut tires fit all standard rims.

10% Oversize

No-Rim-Cut tires, because they are hookless, can be made 10% oversize and still fit the rim. And we do it—without any extra charge.

That means 10% more air—10% greater carrying capacity. And that, with the average car, adds 25% to the tire mileage.

This 10% oversize takes care of the extras—the top, glass front, etc. It saves overloading, saves blow-outs. Nine times in ten, without this oversize, tires have too much load.

These two features together—No-Rim-Cut and oversize—with the average car will cut tire bills in two. Yet they cost nothing extra. Is it any wonder—that the demand for these tires has become so overwhelming?

Our Tire Book, based on 12 years of tire making, tells many facts you should know. Ask us to mail it to you.



No-Rim-Cut Tires

With or Without Non-Skid Tread



No-Rim-Cut Tire



Ordinary Clincher Tire

THE GOODYEAR TIRE & RUBBER COMPANY,
Branches and Agencies in 103 Principal Cities
Canadian Factory: Bowmanville, Ontario

Eighth Street, AKRON, OHIO

We Make All Sorts of Rubber Tires
Main Canadian Office: Toronto, Ontario

(318)



For The Family

YOU work to provide for your wife and children. Your ambitions are for them. You intend to make up to your wife the self-denials she has practiced. You plan that the girls and the boys shall have their chance; you picture the future by your hope.

But have you had the forethought to realize that death does not halt for any man's hopes, or wait for any man's convenience? Have you made such provisions for the future that your family will receive an income adequate to their needs in case of your death?

By devoting a small percentage of your income to life insurance your hopes will become realities to them.

A Guaranteed Low Cost Life Insurance Policy for \$1,000 at age 35 costs but six cents a day and will not lapse if you become unable to pay the premiums in consequence of total and permanent disability from accident or disease.

MORAL: Insure in THE TRAVELERS

Send today for information about the Travelers
Guaranteed Low Cost Life Insurance.

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the pioneer Accident Company of America.



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GARDEN CITY, LONG ISLAND.

Illustrated Booklet on Request.



THE FOYER



THE TWO ENTRANCES



THE DINING ROOM



Do You Smoke Advertising? or Cigaretts? Read This

The usual way of putting a new cigarette on the market is simply to put the same old cigarette into a new box, and *whoop' er up!* A big selling organization and big advertising are brought to bear and *big sales are the result.* When the novelty of the *new label* wears off and the public is ready for a change, *the process is repeated*—and the patient public goes on *smoking advertising*—not cigarettes.

For fifteen years the public has been *stampeded* from one cigarette to another in just this way, and about the only change it ever gets is from a red box to a blue one and back again—with an occasional dash of brown. In short, the average cigarette is not a *smoking proposition*, but a *selling proposition*.

The Makaroff business is different. I started the manufacture of

MAKAROFF RUSSIAN CIGARETS

because that was the only way I could be sure of getting *the kind* of cigarettes I wanted. It has grown because there are a lot of other folks who want *that kind* of a cigarette. And the number grows just as fast as people find out *what kind* of a cigarette Makaroff is.

Just let this fact sink into your consciousness and stay there—*this business is and always will be operated to make a certain kind* of cigarettes—not merely to do a certain *amount* of business. I always have believed that if we produced the quality, the public would produce the sales. And that faith has been justified. Makaroffs are really different from other cigarettes—and the difference is all in your favor.

You will find that you can smoke as many Makaroffs as you want without any of the nervousness, depression or "craving" that follows the use of ordinary cigarettes.

Makaroffs are absolutely pure, clean, sweet, *bold tobacco, untouched by anything whatever to give them artificial flavor, sweetness, or to make them burn.*

Pure tobacco won't hurt you. You may not be used to it, and you may not like the first Makaroff, but you'll like the second one better, and you'll stick to Makaroffs forever if you once give them a fair chance. We have built this business on quality in the goods and intelligence in the smoker—a combination that simply can't lose.

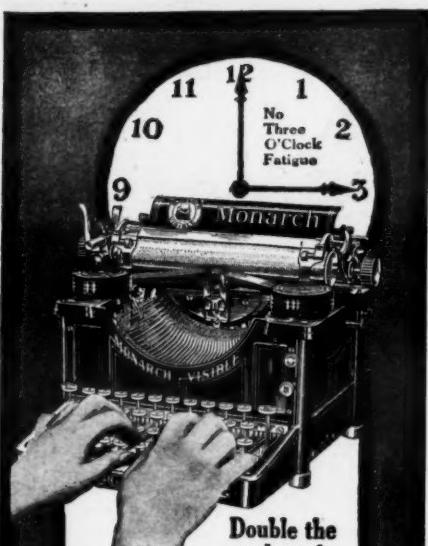
No. 15 is 15 Cents—No. 25 is a Quarter
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**Double the
value of
your operator's services**

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The light key action—an exclusive Monarch feature—so lightens the operator's labor that she turns out a greater volume of work, proportionately increasing the value of her services.

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Send for Monarch literature—it thoroughly explains Monarch construction. Try the Monarch; you will at once learn that its superiority actually rests in the machine itself, not merely in what we say about it.

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Local Representatives wanted everywhere, also a few more dealers for large territories. Write for details and attractive terms.

The Monarch Typewriter Company

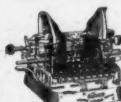
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We put the best typewriter in the world right in your home or office. Shipped on approval. Use it five days. If you want to keep it send us \$5 a month. You get the same value as you would pay \$100 for this machine. No 3 Over. Visible machine. Buying from us saves the 100 per cent agency profits other people pay. Our booklet is worth \$5 to you, because it saves you that much. It's FREE. Tell us where to send your copy.

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Remember, it places you under no obligation to spend a cent, but will bring to you information that may be worth a fortune. Send the Coupon today.

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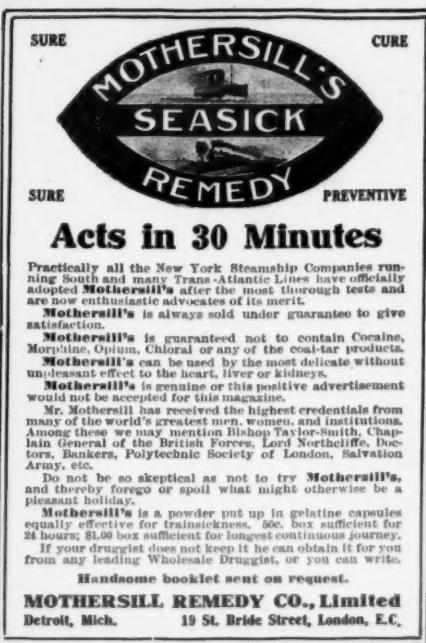
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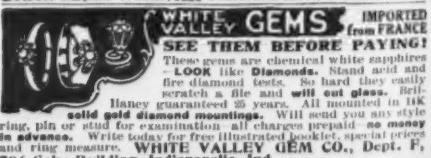
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Harmless and Positive. **NO FAILURE.** Your reduction is assured—re-
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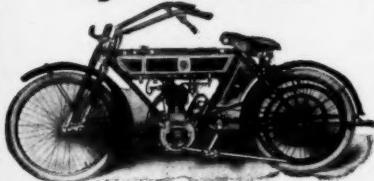
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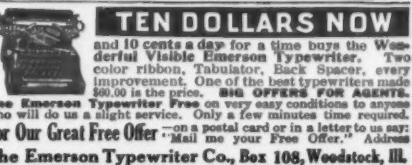
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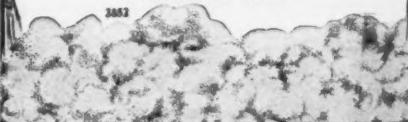
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GUARANTEED
PLUMBING
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Their installation is an assurance of home health and comfort, and is a guarantee of a lifetime of satisfactory and economical service.

"The Plumbing Fixtures shown in this advertisement cost, approximately, \$97.00, except when sold in the Far West."

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